THROUGH·THE·YELLOWSTONE WITH PAUL·AND·PEGGY

FLORENCE·E·SCOTT

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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To Esther:

Merry Xmas — 1925.

Miss Luce.

How dense the shadows and how vivid the coloring in the walls where the sun strikes!—*Page* 243

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MR. RICHARD HURST

THROUGH THE YELLOWSTONE WITH PAUL AND PEGGY

BY

FLORENCE E. SCOTT

AUTHOR OF "HERE AND THERE WITH PAUL AND PEGGY,"
"ACROSS THE CONTINENT WITH PAUL AND PEGGY,"
"KINDERGARTEN LIMERICKS," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED
BY ARTHUR O. SCOTT

"My native country, thee,
Land of the noble, free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills."

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UPB

TO

ELIZABETH SCOTT HURST

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THROUGH THE YELLOWSTONE WITH PAUL AND PEGGY.

BOOK I.—IN BOSTON WITH THE TWINS.

CHAPTER I.

"A HERO IS INVOLVED."

"No one has heard a single word about Judson Brewster for months, and Aunt Mary simply worries over him night and day. She is growing thin and pale and frail under the strain. It's all *wrong,*" pondered Peggy Bennett, walking more and more slowly and shaking her head unseeingly at passersby. "Of course it's all wrong. We thought last summer it was surely coming right. But now, for all anybody knows, Judson Brewster vanished completely from the face of the earth instead of leaving Seattle on an eastbound train as the detective said he had in July. I wonder *where* he did go. I've wondered a thousand times."

Peggy paused irresolutely and then stepped from the crowded sidewalk into the crowded street. Utterly unmindful of the confusion of her surroundings, she continued the train of thought that had absorbed her.

"What puzzles me is this: why hasn't Judson Brewster come home—long ago—to see if Aunt Mary is living, at least? He could easily find out where——"

The raucous scream of a yellow taxicab as it bore down upon her interrupted Peggy's meditations and brought her to a wavering standstill in the middle of Tremont Street. As she hesitated, bewildered, a second taxi whirled across her path and a third machine scuttled by behind her, effectively cutting off both advance and retreat.

"Move on, can't yuh?" yelled the driver of the first cab angrily, rising half out of his seat, jabbing his foot hard on the brake and flinging out a hand in warning to vehicles in the rear. "Ain't yuh got no sense? Don't yuh know no better than to cross here? *You* need a gard*een, you* do."

Peggy looked appealingly at the red-faced, gesticulating man, resenting his tone, regretting its cause, but standing her ground while she waited for a chance to dash to safety.

The driver now discovered that his motor had "gone dead" under the sudden shock of stopping, and, ablaze with fresh wrath, climbed out to start the engine again. Two constant streams of automobiles sped by in opposite directions, deflecting their course neatly to avoid the girl, the man, and the taxi whom they left stranded most unwillingly together as in the vortex of a whirlpool.

"You still here holdin' up traffic?" jeered the man as the handle of his old-fashioned starter

gave his wrist a sharp blow and stirred his temper to fiercer heat. "This ain't no sight-seein' gallery, nor it ain't no safety zone, neither. How'd yuh expect——"

But Peggy had spied at last a little break in the busy line of passing motors and she dashed for the opening like a startled mouse hurrying to cover. Then a siren screamed at her, and as though it were a signal, she slipped on a slight depression, lost her balance and fell headlong in the path of an approaching car.

Its occupants rose from their seats aghast as Peggy dropped from sight. It seemed inevitable that the heavy wheels must crush her, and had her safety depended upon the frightened chauffeur, there would indeed have been a tragic ending to Peggy's attempt to cross Tremont Street on that April afternoon. But a quicker wit and a stronger hand than his came to Peggy's rescue, and she was jerked roughly to the sidewalk when there was barely an inch of space to spare.

A portly man and a young girl of Peggy's own age leaped from the touring car as it finally came to a stop and rushed back to see if she were hurt. Meantime her rescuer had pulled her to her feet and steadied her as she stood leaning dazedly against him.

"You are all right," he was saying reassuringly.

"Are you hurt?" demanded the owner of the car, thrusting his hand into a bulging pocket. "It was not our fault, but——"

"You aren't hurt, you aren't," declared his daughter excitedly, seizing Peggy's arm and giv-

ing it a little shake. "You're not hurt. You know you are not hurt. Just say it yourself: you're not hurt."

"No, I'm not hurt," said Peggy obediently.

"There!" ejaculated the girl triumphantly.

"Oh, yes she is," asserted her father, withdrawing his hand with an air of relief nevertheless. "See, her gloves are nearly scraped off her hands and her fingers are bruised and bleeding."

"Never mind. I'm not hurt, really," repeated Peggy, standing alone firmly now and trying to hide her injuries. "Please don't wait,—any of you," she added, looking up at the tall stranger, who still held a hand supportingly under her elbow. "Thank you so much. Now I shall just find a brother and wait till my bench comes along. He is due to meet me here already, very soon. He might be too early and I am almost nearly late."

The men laughed aloud, which greatly puzzled Peggy.

"She is all right," declared the Motor Girl again positively but more calmly. "Tongue-twisted, but that's nothing. Just continue to assert the truth, my dear: you are not hurt. Come, Father, we mustn't miss our train."

As the two returned to their impatient companions and panting machine, the little crowd which had gathered interestedly about Peggy dispersed also, and she was left alone with the young man who had shared her experience.

"It is always easy to deny pain—in others," he commented good-naturedly, "and it's not a bad habit to acquire for ourselves. Now I see

an empty bench in the near distance," he continued in a pleasant, drawling tone. "It commands a view of the greening Common and bids one forget the hustling street. Suppose we navigate in that direction."

"Thank you, I really can go alone," Peggy began protestingly, "but I'd like to try to say how much I ap-ap-appre-apprehend——"

Peggy stopped abruptly—That wasn't what she had started to say! Why wouldn't her tongue and her brain work properly together?

"Anyhow, I'm not hurt," she finished, secure in the positive assurance that the Motor Girl had given her.

The stranger smiled and remarked quietly, "Certainly, I understand. You wish to say that you *appreciate* being here in the Common, instead of—elsewhere. You prefer to remain with the Common people rather than to be swept suddenly into the company of the elect. Quite so. I sympathize with your point of view, and, moreover, I do indeed understand it."

Peggy felt that he did; so she made no further effort to control her wayward tongue.

"Let me see your hands," the young man went on, pulling off Peggy's gray gloves gently. He rolled them into a neat ball and stuffed them absent-mindedly into his pocket. "We'll just take a look at the torn cuticle on these knuckles."

Peggy meekly allowed him to do as he would, but when he produced a tiny tube of antiseptic salve and a little roll of sterile gauze, a strip of plaster and a wee pair of scissors, she felt that if he pulled a yard of ribbon out of his sleeve and a

rabbit from the crown of his hat she could hardly feel more surprised.

His fingers worked busily over hers for a moment, and then,

"Sorry I can't wait with you until your brother arrives, but I have an appointment," he said, jumping to his feet. (He surely was a prestidigitator, thought Peggy, for the scissors, gauze, tape and salve had done their work and miraculously disappeared.)

He lifted his hat and turned on his heel while Peggy made another futile attempt to express her gratitude. Then he sat down again abruptly and took out a thin bill-book and pencil.

"If the fingers bother you after a day or two, I would consider it a favor if you'd call me up. Just 'phone the hospital. I've put the number on my card, and——"

"Oh, you're a doctor!" ejaculated Peggy, finding words at last, and smiling at this simple solution of the mystery.

"Only in embryo—interne in the out-patient ward—but a message would reach me—uncensored. Rather hope you'll be bothered just enough to call me up," and with a slow smile the tall Young Doctor strode away up a path that led toward Beacon Street.

"My gracious me!" gasped Peggy, left alone at last to gaze at a neatly bandaged left hand. "I remind myself of the little old woman in Mother Goose. I don't know myself, but of whom shall I ask, 'Little Dog, Little Dog, is this I?' "

Peggy stood up the better to realize that she

was indeed still herself, but sat down again suddenly. Her knees were trembling absurdly, flatly refusing to bear her weight.

"Now how did it all happen?" she demanded of herself. "I was thinking about—something. Oh, Judson Brewster, of course. And I tried to cross the street! I remember—and then that awful taxicab! What a rude man and what a tempest in a teapot! Just as though I did it on purpose!"

Peggy discovered that her hands, too, were shaking when she pressed them to her hot face.

"Nonsense," she said reprovingly to the palsied fingers. "'Ain't yuh got no sense? Don't yuh know no better than to——'"

"Well, Margaret Carruthers Bennett," a gay voice interrupted her. "Speaking of angels, what beneficently smiling sky dropped you into this particular spot just in time to cheer my dark blue day? What kind Fate guided your footsteps safely to this quiet haven so near the crowded thoroughfare? What——"

"Oh, Helen Bentley!" cried Peggy, forgetting her woes and springing up to embrace her dramatic friend with more than her usual fervor. "I am *so* glad to see you. I have had an Adventure, and I'm still all wiggly from it."

"Ah, ha! Peggy's Adventure or How They Do It in Boston. 'Analyze it, Miss Bentley.' 'Yes, sir. First: Something Happens to Our Peggy. Second: A Hero is Involved. Third: The Romance Ends Happily.' Ting-a-ling-ling! Wedding bells ring."

Peggy laughed. "Nothing so lucky as that,

you foolish Imp. But it *was* a drama in two acts, on second thought. Sit down and I'll tell you all about it."

"Speak!" commanded Helen, thrusting her face forward characteristically.

"Well, first, and that was shock enough, I held a conversation with an illiterate man—*in Boston!*"

"H'm! Probably had a copy of Emerson in his pocket just the same. Must have been a brand-new-comer or else his inoculation with the serum of culture hadn't 'took,' " observed Helen wisely. "But how came you to hear a *man* murder the King's English?"

"Only because he nearly murdered me with his taxi first," rejoined Peggy, laughing. " 'Ain't yuh got no sense?' sez he. 'Don't yuh know no better?' sez he. And all I had done was to try to cross the street!"

"Where'd you try to cross?" demanded Helen, looking back knowingly at the passing procession of motor vehicles of all descriptions.

"Right there," asserted Peggy defensively. "But I confess I was dreaming and not thinking where I was going."

Helen seized her by the shoulders and faced her toward the corner opposite them.

"And you call yourself a traveler! Now listen: See 'de cop' cooling his heels in the middle of the street there? Greenie, wake up; you're still in the grand old city of Boston. Know ye the meaning of the Boston cop: By this sign ye cross! Your taxi friend, apparently immune from the culture germ, has the argument in his

favor and you were quite, quite in the wrong place.

"But, say, Peggy, I've 'most forgotten how blue I am. Oh, I'm desperately, desperately blue!" and Helen settled into an attitude of despondency.

"Why, what ail'st thou, Imp dear?" questioned Peggy, not greatly concerned, however, since Helen was often "down" one hour apparently in order to be "up" the next. "Is this real or only a scene from your lesson for to-morrow?"

"There will be no lesson for to-morrow," the Imp responded tragically, allowing two big tears to well into her eyes when she was sure that Peggy was looking; "my career is ended; my hopes are dead."

"Well, let's go across to Shawler's and have some choc'late ice-cream soda before we bury them," cried Peggy, springing up and assuming a brisk confidence that she did not feel. "Probably you're hungry; also thirsty; also tired; also homesick. I know I am—or was before my Adventure."

"Perhaps I am hungry. Maybe that accounts for some of the indigo hue. Guess I forgot to eat any lunch, I was so excited declaiming: 'Be it yours to give men bread; be it mine to give them themselves.' But don't mention *home,* if you love me," ejaculated Helen, seizing Peggy's arm and leading the way toward the blue-coated official in whose ability to clear a safe path she had expressed her faith. "Home! I'd embrace a dirty little Dago from 'beyond the crossing,'

if he'd just come in from Hilton," she added gloomily.

"Better come down to the North End with me to-morrow morning and embrace some of my little Dagos, as you call them," Peggy suggested as the girls found a table just within Shawler's wide entrance, and gave their order. "And please bring two club sandwiches, also," she told the young waitress, glancing at Helen with a smile.

"That's a good idea, Peggy," approved the Imp, drawing off her gloves and patting her hair back behind her ears. "You give one courage. Chocolate ice-cream soda and a club sandwich surely make a grand combination to offer an empty stomach!"

"Don't be sarcastic, Miss Bentley. You know the very mention of them makes your mouth water. But, fooling aside, aren't you getting on well at the School of Dramatic Art?"

"Oh, splendidly! I've had two call-downs for undue haste in rendering, 'Quoth the raven: Nevermore'; another for unnecessary deliberation in reciting, 'Round the rugged rock the ragged rascals ran'; and a demerit or some kind of an old mark for careless appearance one morning when I overslept half an hour. I'm almost ready to bow graciously in response to the deafening plaudits of the pleased public—reversibly speaking.—How are you enjoying washing Tony's face and teaching Esperanza how to skip?"

"All right," answered Peggy briefly. "But, Imp, I'm learning every day how little I know about *everything*. It's all the slowest kind of

foundation work for me these days, and maybe it's the same for you. I suppose I couldn't expect to direct a kindergarten my first year of training,—but sometimes I'm so discouraged, I wonder if I'll ever know enough to!—Well, I imagine even you did not anticipate setting Boston on fire immediately!"

"Oh, yes, I did," declared Helen, glancing up mischievously from her ice-cream soda. "I expected to take the *élite* of Boston by storm with my *Juliet* and *Becky*. But perhaps—why, whatever is the matter with your hand, Peggy Bennett?"

Peggy had succeeded in hiding her bandaged fingers from Helen's roving gaze up to this moment by a studied carelessness of manner and a judicious use of her handkerchief. Her gray gloves she had not been able to find, although she had searched when she first missed them.

"Oh, this is part of 'Act Two,'" Peggy rejoined, shaking her head at her sad-looking hand.

"Sure enough! You didn't finish telling me about your Adventure, did you? Probably I was so absorbed in my own ego, as Professor Matthews puts it, that I took the centre of the stage while your sketch was still on and never knew it. What's your cue? Oh, yes,—'Murder,' she cried, 'I only went to cross the street.' What happened?"

"Why—I crossed, finally," replied Peggy rather lamely.

"So I had concluded, since I found you crosst," commented Helen dryly. "But why the sick

phalanges? And who tied the pretty tapes on them so dinkily?"

"I hit 'em on the asphalt," admitted Peggy.

"Oh," groaned Helen with an impatient gesture, "where's your dramatic sense? 'Mad at the whirling confusion of the noisy city, I beat impotently upon the unyielding pavement——' Who are you watching for?" she interrupted herself to demand. "You can't keep your eyes off the street two seconds in succession."

"Oh, I'm waiting for Paul, you know. He told me to be here at four, I came at four-thirty, it is now five,—you see, I was safe enough in not being prompt."

"How long would you wait for him?" asked Helen, smiling.

"Till he came," answered Peggy resignedly.

"Well, there he comes, and another man, *too!*" exclaimed the Imp excitedly, jumping up from the table. "You keep your eye on the eats and I'll call them—him—over."

Helen dashed out of the door, darted to the side of the Bluecoat, dived for the Common and reached Paul's side before Peggy had more than located his familiar figure among the many passing pedestrians on the border of the Common.

"Mr. Bennett!" called Helen demurely as Paul paused as though to bid his companion farewell. "Your sister awaits you. May I guide you into her presence?"

Paul turned and smiled broadly as he caught the formal words and noted the mocking gleam in Helen's eyes.

"Is this farce, fact or fiction?" he asked. "I

see that the habit still grows. Wait a minute, Arnold," he added, turning to his friend. "I want you to meet a girl from home—and my sister, also, if you will. This is a friend of Junior Ford's, Helen; Doctor Arnold, Miss Bentley. Miss Bentley is a near-actress, Doctor Arnold. She's showing them how up at the Dramatic Art School. 'Lead on, MacDuff!'"

Taking it for granted that young Arnold would follow, Paul grasped Helen's arm firmly and started to cross the street with her. All her recent confidence had apparently deserted her, and she allowed Paul to direct her timid feet quite as though she had not a moment before dodged traffic in independent haste.

"We're only half through our club sandwiches and ice-cream sodas," explained Helen as she led the two into the confectioner's, "so you can get something to eat, too, if you like. I always take plenty of time at my meals."

"Meals!" gasped the new friend, laughing explosively. "Do you call——"

But Paul was mentioning his name and Peggy's, and Peggy was standing and looking incredulously at the stranger.

"Why,—it's *you,*" they both managed to say, to the others' amazement.

"And you are Bennett's sister?" the man ejaculated.

"But what does this mean? Where have you two met?" questioned Paul, looking from one to the other in bewilderment.

"Ah, ha!" whispered Helen aloud, intuitively guessing the truth. "Act Three begins!"

CHAPTER II.

A STORY AND A STAR.

It was some minutes before Paul Bennett's curiosity and Helen Bentley's intuition were satisfied or justified by any explanations that Peggy and Franklin Arnold seemed disposed to offer. Peggy felt ashamed to confess the extent of her absent-mindedness, and the Young Doctor was becomingly modest in regard to his share in the incident. But over the sandwiches and sodas, the truth gradually came out.

"I can't say it was nothing, since it probably meant Miss Bennett's life," said the Doctor with an air of finality, "and I'm mighty glad I happened to be on the spot."

"Aunt Mary would say it was Providence that put you there," commented Peggy soberly, and the Doctor gave her a quick, pleased look.

"Speaking of Aunt Mary, is there any more news of her prodigal son?" asked Helen with sudden interest.

"That's what I was thinking of when I walked into danger!" exclaimed Peggy, recalling afresh the cause of her mental absorption. "I can't forget him, and the mystery of his disappearance, just when we thought he was practically located. I often find myself puzzling over it."

"H'm! Nervous disorders and mental disturbances are my specialty," announced young Doctor Arnold briskly, taking out his inevitable bill-book, scrap of paper and pencil.

" 'Patient's name: Miss Bennett',—Peggy, I gather from hearsay. 'Disorder: Vain dreams of an absent young man. Peculiar circumstances: Indifference to personal danger and——' "

"Oh, you're 'way off, Arnold," interrupted Paul, laughing. "Judson Brewster is fifty if he's a day, and he's been a wanderer for over thirty years. I don't think much of him myself, but his mother seems to——"

"And I guess you would, if you were poor lonely Aunt Mary," exclaimed Helen, as the four rose from the table.

"I would like to know more of this case," remarked the Young Doctor, fitting his step to Peggy's as Paul and Helen led the way out. "The psychology of it interests me," he added learnedly, looking down at Peggy's upturned face.

"Mercy! he *is* tall," Peggy thought, but aloud she said, "I'm only as far as 'apperception' in what is supposed to be an *easy* book on psychology, so I haven't learned to apply even the first principles yet. But if any one knew enough, I should imagine that Judson Brewster would make a good subject for study."

"Now, tell me," said the Young Doctor, as a little later the four took the "long path," made famous by the Autocrat, and sauntered slowly between rows of early budding trees.

His tone suggested to Peggy's ready imagination two big arm-chairs drawn up in front of a cozy fire, and she felt as though he had settled himself and her for a long, confidential chat. To such a picture, Peggy could hardly fail to respond, and before she half realized that she had begun, she was deep in the tale of mystery.

"Judson Brewster was born in China, but for all that, as Paul says, he was not a Celestial. Aunt Mary (she's not our aunt at all, but we love to call her so), and Uncle Ben Brewster had had to go to China on business. They had a perfectly dreadful experience getting there. The first time they tried, they were captured by a Confederate cruiser—the *Alabama*—in mid-ocean. It was war times—the Civil War, you know,—and they were held prisoners, and finally landed on the coast of South America! If you care to hear more about their experiences, you must ask Paul to tell you the whole story some day.

"Well, they finally reached China, lived there a while and came home when Judson was about a year old. Aunt Mary says that Judson was the most *restless* being even as a baby, and he grew more so all the time. He would run away in spite of all that she could do, first from home and later from school. And, finally, as Aunt Mary says sadly, when he was eighteen, he ran so far that he lost his way back. And she has never seen him since."

Peggy paused and looked up earnestly at the doctor, now thoroughly interested. "How would your psychology explain that?" she demanded.

"Did he love his mother?" asked her companion in return.

"Oh, yes! Aunt Mary says he was always affectionate; and he was lovable, too. He made friends easily and they never forgot him wherever he went."

"Poor chap!" ejaculated the Young Doctor. "He had a hard time of it."

"*He!*" replied Peggy a little scornfully. "It was Aunt Mary who had the hard time, *I* think."

"Oh, of course. But the young chap wasn't altogether to blame for his temperament. He just had to rove. It was born in him. And he probably hadn't inherited quite enough of the New England 'sense of duty' to balance his roving instincts and keep him home. Was his father hard on him?"

"Uncle Ben? Why no, I guess not. Mother says he was the patientest man she ever knew, *not* excepting Job."

"Whom, I suppose, she did not know, personally," put in Doctor Arnold, smiling at Peggy's remark. "Well, there's no doubt that the *wanderlust* was in this young man's blood, and again I say, 'Poor chap!' For if he loved his mother and if his father was 'patienter than Job,' I can guess that life was an hourly struggle for him. But it is a pity that his mother never heard from him."

"Oh, I didn't say that," exclaimed Peggy quickly. "She did,—just once, thirty years ago. But what interests us all now is that a San Francisco sharper got hold of her only last year and took money for sending her word of her son."

"So she knows that the son is actually living —after all these years of silence?" questioned the young man, surprised.

"Yes, she knows that. He is alive,—or was last summer. We almost saw him ourselves. That is, while we were in California we saw the sharper who had seen him; and if we had gone north to Portland and Seattle as we had planned, Mother and Cousin Dick hoped we should see Judson Brewster himself. But we decided to come home direct from San Francisco because mother's sister was very ill. After that, all the detective succeeded in learning was that Judson had left the Seattle hospital and probably taken a train east a short time before."

"And since then?"

"Since then, not a word, nor a sign. The only man who ever seemed able to keep track of Judson Brewster was the sharper—and he is still in jail."

"Still talking about Lucky Brewster?" interrupted Paul at that moment. "It won't be surprising if he is never located."

"Oh, Paul, don't be so discouraging!" exclaimed Helen Bentley.

"Well, you know they say these natural wanderers have a way of simply disappearing into a hole and drawing the hole in after them—or something like that."

"Yes, the detective said that without apparently trying, these rovers would completely cover their tracks and—vanish," added Peggy.

"Was that why you spoke of him as 'Lucky Brewster,' Bennett?" asked the Young Doctor,

just as they crossed Charles Street and entered the Public Garden.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Peggy, her blue eyes shining excitedly as she looked up at the questioner. "That was because once he *was* lucky—he made a lucky strike in the Cripple Creek Gold Fields. We heard about him there. That was one of the wonderful places we visited on our trip last summer, you know."

"But we didn't know it was *our* Brewster who had been lucky until long after," added Paul.

"Why, no. At that time we did not even know that Aunt Mary had a long-lost son. Mother knew, though, and she was terribly excited about the story of the lucky miner," concluded Peggy.

"And you don't know whether he ever made an effort to go back home and find his parents?" mused the young psychologist.

"No. If only Aunt Mary knew *that,* it might comfort her. Mother thinks that Judson believes his mother is dead, just as Aunt Mary thought *he* was until last year."

"It's a mighty interesting case," quoth the Young Doctor thoughtfully.

No one heard him, however, for Paul exclaimed just then, "Joys of my infancy! There are the Swan Boats!"

"Boston and Swan Boats were synonymous terms to Paul until he was quite a big boy," explained Peggy in answer to Doctor Arnold's look of inquiry. "When we were three or four years old our parents brought us to Boston and Father took Paul for a ride on the Swan Boats while Mother carried me off to some shop or

other. Paul always thought the swans were alive and propelled the boats themselves——"

"And it was a great shock to find they didn't," maintained Paul whimsically. "But let's change the subject. I'm terribly sensitive on that point. By the way, Arnold, have you been west? Perhaps you are familiar with all these places we visited last summer. They are always sticking up like sign-boards in our conversation, but we don't mean to mark the way for old travelers."

"That needn't worry you in this instance. I have been as far west as Chicago, as far south as Richmond and north to the Saint Lawrence. My ambition is to cross the Lakes and see Yellowstone Park before I'm——"

"Yellowstone!" breathed the twins, gazing at the doctor, then at each other and then back at the doctor like well-trained puppets in a puppet show.

"What's the excitement? Have you been *there,* too?"

"Oh, no, but we're going!" cried Peggy, catching her breath, "that is, we mean to go,—we hope to go,—but——"

"Oh, yes, they are *going,"* echoed Helen, imitating Peggy's emphasis. "Their grips are packed, tickets bought and farewells spoken."

"N-no, not that," refuted Peggy honestly. "We *planned* to go this summer, but—but——"

"But our gilt-edged investments are not turning into gold coin quite as rapidly as we would wish," supplemented Paul airily, "and we may have to——"

"No, we won't give up—yet," interrupted Peggy, looking very serious. Then swinging into a lighter mood, she said, "Helen, I'll borrow your lucky star and wish a wish on it to-night."

"You'll have your wish," nodded Helen. Then she grasped Peggy's arm and pointed dramatically toward the western sky where the evening star suddenly began to blink.

"'Wish I may, wish I might
Have the wish I wish to-night,'"

chanted the Imp, her eyes fixed on the single brilliant star, her face intense, her body rigid, her voice deep and mysterious. "I see—three wishes for you—three surprises—to be realized in the near future." Then she continued:

"'Star of the Night, lucky star,
Beaming and bright, gleaming far,
Grant to this maiden riches rare
Enough for her needs and railway fare.'"

"Bravo!" applauded young Arnold. "Now, maybe, if you will add a wish for me, I, too, may choose my route and buy my ticket in the near future."

"One moment!" cautioned Helen, her rapt face still turned toward the soft tints of sunset.

They waited half-amused, half-impressed by her intentness. Then she raised both hands imploringly toward her lucky star and repeated softly:

"'Oh, Star of the Night, lucky star,
Beaming and bright, gleaming far,
List to this youth, heed and hark,
Grant him a trip to Yellowstone Park.'"

Helen held the pose of the pleading mediator for a moment more, then flinging her hands gaily above her head, she broke into a peal of laughter. As the others joined her, Doctor Arnold said with a gleam of genuine admiration in his eye:

"Miss Bentley, I here and now am promising myself the pleasure of seeing you on your first appearance in the drama. And more than that, I prophesy your speedy ascent to the rôle of star."

"But this—to-night—*was* her star performance," put in Paul facetiously.

"'Star light, star bright,"

hummed Helen, happily.

"'Very first star I've seen to-night,
Tell me, tell me, all I want to know."

"Don't! That makes me homesick," begged Peggy, thrusting her hands deeper into her pockets, conscious of a sudden longing for the Home on the Hill, and the old crowd at Hilton Academy.

"Don't you care, Peggy. It is less than a month now before we'll be back in Hilton," said Paul, reading her expression.

"And then, how you will miss Boston," put in Doctor Arnold with a laugh.

"*I* shall," declared Helen. "The excitement

of living in the city, seeing crowds of people, hearing confusing noises, running a thousand risks of being knocked down by automobiles and saved by interesting strangers——"

She paused and even Peggy laughed at that.

"All these things suit me. Every single day I see people in the cars and on the streets that would draw big houses if only they were on the stage."

"But if they were, they would lose all their charm," suggested the doctor.

"And so I study them and imitate them when I go home at night. I do monologues until the girl who rooms next door raps on the wall. She says I sound interesting but nevertheless she has to write up her society column for the rural papers."

"Say, Peggy, you don't have to hide your invalid hands all the time, do you?" asked Paul suddenly, observing Peggy's bulging pockets. "Why not put on your gloves if you feel cold?"

"My hands are not cold. I like to put 'em in my pockets, though; I always did. And besides, I've lost my gloves somewhere."

Doctor Arnold doubtless heard Peggy's remark, but he did not confess his connection with her lost gloves. It may have slipped his mind. At any rate, only the inquisitive and observing Imp—Helen Bentley—noted that a gray glove finger was peeping incautiously out of his pocket. And she said nothing.

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD FRIEND.

"Yes?" called Peggy Bennett in response to a tap at the door of her room on the third floor at Number 999 St. Peter's Place.

"Telephone," sang a girl's voice outside, and Peggy opened the door quickly. "I was coming up, so Mrs. Barnes asked me to tell you. She's holding the wire."

"Oh, thank you, Barbara," cried Peggy, already springing down the long flight of stairs, her hand slipping rapidly over the smooth bannister. "Coming," she added as she ran through the second dusky hall and started down the second flight of stairs. "Thank you, Mrs. Barnes. Is it long distance?"

"No, it's Mrs. Thornton, dearie. She's been telling me the latest Brookline news," said the white-haired Housemother of Triple Nine,—as Peggy had dubbed the private boarding-house on St. Peter's Place.

Peggy seized the receiver eagerly.

"Hello! Cousin Nell? This is Peggy. . . . Oh, *Nell!* . . . Isn't that perfectly *splendid!* . . . What time? . . . Paul and I will be ready. . . . Yes, we'll bring our sweaters. . . . All right. . . . How is Jack? . . . And Littlejohn?

. . . Not really? His *fourth* tooth through! Isn't he proud? . . . Oh, *you* are!" laughed Peggy. "Yes. . . . Good-bye, Nell. Two o'clock to-morrow. Good-bye."

Peggy Bennett smiled happily as she hung up the receiver and glanced into the mirror beside the telephone stand.

"*Just* what I was wishing for," she whispered to herself. "I am so *tired* of these old brownstone fronts and grassless lawns and smooth pavements and sky-scraping vistas! I believe I'll go over and tell the tulips and the grackles all about it. I can't wait till to-morrow to shout, and nobody cares if I squeal a little over there in the Garden, anyway."

Peggy started up the stairs but stopped abruptly at the sound of a latch key in the door behind her. Seeing a familiar soft gray hat through the panel of glass, she sped up the remaining steps, crouched down in the dark corner at the head of the stairway and awaited its wearer's approach.

Whistling softly, Paul mounted the stairs with a carelessness that showed his familiarity with their characteristic turn at the top. Then he brushed against some soft, indistinguishable object.

"*Himmel!* What have we here?" he exclaimed, leaving his interrupted melody suspended on a high note.

An unmistakable giggle answered him.

"Kid!" he ejaculated scornfully.

Peggy sprang up, seized him in a choking embrace and hurried him along the corridor.

"I could make progress more slowly—perhaps," protested Paul, dropping his hat and a fat new magazine in his effort to keep his feet in the narrow passage. "Unhand me, villain!"

"All right; only hurry. I have something to tell you and it won't keep."

"You mean you won't keep it," gibed Paul. "Well, you needn't. Out with it."

By this time the two had climbed the stairs to the room next to Peggy's, a study that they shared in common. Paul's bedroom was still another flight up, a bare, airy room in keeping with his ideas of sleeping quarters.

One familiar with the old Den at home in Hilton would readily recognize the twins' fine touch in their present sitting-room and study.

It was plain that the room had been equally divided—very plain—for a white chalk line ran conspicuously across the dark rug from a spot exactly between the two large windows to the exact centre of the couch pushed against the opposite wall. One somehow saw Peggy's hand rather than Paul's in this systematic arrangement.

"Come, play in my yard, Paul, while I tell you," directed Peggy, pulling a cushion out of a Sleepy Hollow chair and pushing Paul into its inviting emptiness.

Paul flung his hat and magazine at an unoffending tabouret that stood beside the easel near *his* north window, leaned back comfortably, settled his head against his clasped hands and yawned, "Pro-ceed."

"Oh, you'll sit up and point your ears when

you hear my news," nodded Peggy, leaning forward suddenly. "How'd you like to take a long, long spin in the Mountaineer to-morrow afternoon?"

Paul sat up even as Peggy had predicted, his hands coming down on the leather arms of the chair with a vigorous slap.

"Bully! Only—— H'm," he pondered arrested by a disconcerting afterthought.

"Oh, Paul! You haven't made an engagement for to-morrow!"

"No, not an engagement, dear sister. Only a date with our friend, the doctor."

"Oh, *that's* all right," exclaimed Peggy, relieved. "We'll take him, too."

"Sure, Peggy?"

"Of course. There is always room for a wayfaring man in the Mountaineer! And Cousin Nell is anxious to meet him, anyway."

"What does she know about him?" questioned Paul teasingly.

"Oh, I told her what a learned psychologist he was and she wants to consult him about Littlejohn's mental development," replied Peggy, picking up a stray thread from the rug. "And there is another reason why Doctor Arnold will be the very one to complete the party to-morrow. Who else do you suppose is going?"

"Give it up," said Paul promptly.

"Old Doc Smith, the Natural Bone-Setter!"

"That is the best news yet," returned Paul sincerely. "Only to-day I was thinking of him. The Life Class was working from a model: 'Type of a Vigorous Old Man,' and I said to my-

self, said I, 'Doc Smith of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, has you beaten to a custard, you Vigorous Old Man, you.' When did he blow into town?"

"He blows in to-night," replied Peggy dryly. "Cousin Jack Thornton is to meet him and take him out to Brookline in his 'horseless vehicle,' and we are to go at two to-morrow for a drive in his honor."

And the following day this plan was put into execution. Promptly at two a familiar hoarse scream announced the arrival of the Mountaineer at Triple Nine St. Peter's Place, and promptly, also, Paul, Peggy and Franklin Arnold ran out to the machine, warmly dressed and amply provided with extra sweaters, obedient to Nell's directions. The Young Doctor received from Jack Thornton the cordial welcome that Peggy had promised, and then the head of the Mountaineer was turned homeward, for the balance of the party was to be gathered in at Brookline.

The day was fine,—superfine, Paul declared it. May outdid all her previous efforts to usher in an early summer and produced her brightest, balmiest weather to honor the visitor from the White Mountain State.

As, a little later in the afternoon, the touring car bowled rapidly over the smooth, wide streets on its way to Franklin Park and Dorchester and the Blue Hills of Milton, Jack Thornton, handling the machine with his accustomed skill, turned often to look at the rapt face of the grand old man beside him. The breeze

created by their brisk pace parted the long white beard that usually covered Doc Smith's ample chest, blowing it back like a soft silky fringe on either side of his pink cheeks. His bright blue eyes sparkled happily, his hands gripped the sides of his seat, and his laugh rang out with boyish frequency.

Frequently, too, Jack turned to throw a pleased glance at the passengers behind him. The Mountaineer, famous always for its capacity to hold an unlimited crowd of congenial spirits, lived up to-day to its reputation, for besides Jack's wife Nell and his small son Littlejohn, there were Nell's brother, Richard Hunter, the twins, Paul and Peggy Bennett, and their recent acquaintance, young Doctor Arnold, all comfortably and cozily seated in the roomy tonneau.

For some reason the new friend seemed simply and naturally the "Young Doctor" to them all. Perhaps each one felt as Peggy did that the name suited him,—just that and nothing more; for he was youth incarnate and the spirit of healing personified both by the gifts of inheritance and training.

According to Peggy's suggestion, the Young Doctor had not been told about the interesting man whom he was to meet. So when he was introduced to Doctor Smith he was not a little surprised to hear the old man's pleased chuckle and the explanation which "Neighbor Zeke" was not present this time to make for him.

"Now, see here, young man, don't make any mistake about me. You're a real doctor, I take it, and you mustn't be deceived. I'm no diploma

M.D., myself. They just call me 'Doc,'—well, 'cause they *will,* you know. Ha! Ha! As Neighbor Zeke says—these young folks met Zeke that summer when they stopped at Portsmouth with their broken-up driver here,—as Neighbor Zeke says, 'If it's a case of *bones,* see Doc Smith. He ain't no right to the title, but folks jist will doctor him.' So I'm just a plain natural bone-setter. B.S. is all the degree I can claim, 'n' that's given me only by the People's Home University. Ha! Ha!"

The old man, always hugely pleased at his own little joke, laughed heartily, and Jack added in explanation:

"You see, Doctor Arnold, *I* was the 'broken-up driver' and this gentleman mended me as nicely as the most skilled graduate surgeon could have done."

"And put him on his feet again a lot quicker," appended Dick, remembering how swiftly Jack's ankle had recovered its vigor.

"Well, did you enjoy the rest of your trip despite your break-up?" questioned the old man. "I've never had the chanct to ask you face to face."

"Indeed, I did," replied Jack, steering around a stalled car in Franklin Park near a hill where sheep were searching for the first green signs of good grazing. "As you predicted, the corps of volunteer nurses I had with me made convalescence a constant joy; and you see, Doctor Arnold, I retained one of them for life in consequence," and Jack indicated Nell, whose quick blush answered him as happily as ever.

"Guess you made no mistake, young man," said the old doctor.

"I *know* I didn't," rejoined Jack positively. "That whole trip was the best investment I ever made."

"The trip was a rich experience for me, too," said Paul. "I have a vision of myself as an impecunious artist living upon memories one of these days," he added easily. "I have all sorts of dreams, ideals, ambitions, but none of them are of the money-making variety. I foresee a time of famine and want, of unfinished canvases and unpaid-for portraits, and a gaunt gray wolf hovering near my studio door——"

"But that doesn't seem to worry you," smiled the Young Doctor.

"No. I haven't felt the pangs of real hunger yet, nor the cold pavement through my worn-out shoes. At present the prospect suggests a rather interesting study for a sketch. See the symbolism of it:—see that gaunt, gray hungry wolf, that lean, lank, bony wolf, that waiting, snarling, snapping sentinel crouching in the shadows just outside my attic door——"

"'Only that and nothing more,'" croaked Peggy, overhearing.

"No, no, Peggy, you're not the Raven of my picture; you are the Angel of Deliverance shimmering down a ladder of light to my release."

Jack Thornton broke into Paul's fantasy to call attention to the chain of misty Blue Hills rising into sight against the distant horizon, and Paul took care that the interrupted conversation was not resumed.

On the way back, however, after an exhilarating run through the Blue Hills Reservation, Paul found himself obliged to talk a little practical art with the venerable guest of honor. As the Mountaineer approached Brookline and the end of the trip, Doc Smith, relaxing his tense hold upon himself and the leather seat, turned a little and began to question Paul about his training and his prospects.

"Now what do they really teach you at this Museum of Art class?" the old man asked. "Course you've got the talent or they wouldn't let you in, but how do they develop more in you?"

"Oh, by lecturing to us on the greatest paintings and showing us how to compose pictures ourselves; by making us copy the statues in the galleries, and most of all by criticisms on our drawings," Paul answered rather diffidently.

"And how soon can you make it pay?" continued Doc Smith.

This was the kind of a question that Paul's artistic soul abhorred.

"Oh, whenever we can make good," he answered lightly. "They don't talk to us about how much money we can make by painting. They seem to have an idea we have something inside us we're born to express and their business is to help us get it out. All foolishness, I suppose you think that is," and Paul flushed uncomfortably.

"Lord bless you, boy, that's not all Greek to me, as you seem to think. I'll tell you a secret: When I was younger than you I began to shape

heads and arms and hands and feet out o' mud. I was crazy about it. Then I got hold of some clay from a clay pit, and I worked in that and baked my 'images' in the sun. And finally I read about artists' clay and I got a lot of that.

"Well, maybe I'll show you a room in my attic some time, and then you'll see that I, too, have longed to express something inside me—and didn't know how. Guess a lot of folks are like that—artists, and musicians and poets and writers."

"Perhaps you would like to visit the Museum and see some of the famous casts some time,—'The Discus Thrower,' 'The Wrestlers,' 'Laocoön,' and 'Moses' and a lot of the others we have to study," suggested Paul, moved by the old man's confession.

"I would like that," he replied heartily. "I've read of 'em all and seen their pictures. And I'd like to visit a modern children's hospital with *you,* young man," he added, turning to Franklin Arnold. "I'm 'specially interested in children's surgery. I'd do something myself in that line—if I was younger. Maybe it's too late now.—And, Miss Peggy, so long as I am wishing, I might as well ask for three wishes, the way the boys in fairy tales do. Do you s'pose you could smuggle me into a kindergarten some day, just long enough for me to sense the method a little? I'll tell you why," he continued as Peggy started to speak. "I've been thinking for a long while there must be something in it, 'specially for unfortunate children. And I'd like to see for myself. Maybe, some time—— Well, never

mind my schemes. Likely they'll amount to nothing more than dreams,—the dreams of an old man."

Peggy, as surprised as Paul had been at the secrets of the old doctor's heart, hastened to ask him to visit her North End kiddies; and there and then they agreed upon a day in the following week for his initiation into the kindergarten circle where she was observing and assisting.

Franklin Arnold, also, made an appointment with the "Natural Bone Setter," and in due time showed the old man through a hospital that quickened his longing and fired his determination to do something definite for those whom he called "Broken bits of babies."

Out of these two visits grew that which was destined to make old Doc Smith's dreams realities. But of that he himself shall tell us.

CHAPTER IV.

INSPIRATIONS.

On the following Friday evening, there was gathered about Jack Thornton's table in Brookline the same little party who had enjoyed the drive in his staunch machine, the Mountaineer.

Doc Smith, fresh from his visit to Peggy's North End kindergarten, when urged by the others, waxed eloquent over the experience of that very morning.

"Well, sir," he said, "I'll be jiggered if I can tell how that kindergarten was wound up and run, even after three hours spent looking on and trying to find out!

"First thing I sensed, all the cute little kids were standin' up and bow-ing and scrap-ing most po-litely to somebody. I looked around to see who, and, I snum, they were singing good-morn-ing to *me!* Well, I scrambled up on my feet and yanked off my skull cap and bowed and scraped back."

"Yes, he did," nodded Peggy, "he bowed and smiled like a real live gentleman of the old school, and the children were perfectly delighted. I overheard one little girl say, 'It's Sandy Claus wifout his pack.' And a tiny Jewish boy replied: 'No, it ain't. It's de rabbi.'"

"What else did they do?" questioned Nell, as

the laughter called out by this incident subsided.

"They said their prayers and sung their hymns,—'n' that was better than a sermon to me. It was still, too; you could have heard a mouse nibble. Then they just sat around and talked a spell, every once in a while breaking into jolly little songs. The teachers never scolded nor even appeared to talk very much, but the youngsters knew what they were wanted to say and do, just the same. And they all wanted to say and do it, too! Happy as lambkins at play, those little kids were. Just didn't have time nor inclination to be bad."

"Oh, *good!*" cried Peggy, clapping her hands impulsively. "If you haven't found the key, you are certainly getting 'warm.' Why, our training teacher is always quoting something like that: 'An ordinary child remembers to be good; a kindergarten child forgets to be naughty.'"

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Doc Smith. "If that's the result of kindergartening, I wish we were all subject to it. What a simple remedy—it seems. And yet I don't see how it's mixed and administered," and the Old Doctor shook his white head over the puzzle.

"It is given in strong doses of interest," volunteered Paul, gesticulating impressively. "Peggy has a prescription she used back home in her Good Time Garden. It was effective, too. You could hardly get the little kids to go home at all, they were so crazy for more. 'Babies cry for it,' you know. And good! They were the original models for Raphael's angels!"

Peggy laughed with the rest at Paul's exag-

gerations but admitted that he was right about the "doses of interest."

"Sugar-coated pills, eh?" asked Doctor Smith, smiling. "Looks attractive, tastes good, is easily assimilated, has excellent results."

"Only we wise ones call it 'education through play,'" said Jack Thornton learnedly, leaning back and fitting the tips of his fingers together.

"And we're applying the first principles to Littlejohn," added Nell proudly. "He's very responsive to the 'Mother Plays.' Peggy tells me about them as fast as she learns in her training class."

"What are they, for instance?" asked the old man. "Anything really new?"

"No, perhaps not; most of them are as old as can be; traditional, in fact. Just simple games for the body and legs, fingers and toes, eyes and ears, mouth and nose," replied Nell, laughing at her own unexpected rhyming.

"Oh, you'd do those things anyway," said Doctor Smith, smiling complacently. "All mothers do, instinctively."

"But do they think out *why?*" asked Peggy pointedly. "That is where the difference comes."

"'Insight added to instinct,'" chanted Paul, glancing at Peggy mischievously. "Where have I heard that phrase?"

"Now, Paul, you needn't tease. You see, people, when I am at home I read my compositions and essays to mother for her criticism, but here, where I have to write a 'theory' on every play and instinct and habit and educator we study, I have nobody but my clever brother Paul to ask 'how it sounds.'"

"And the other day," interrupted the clever brother, "she had an inspiration before I came home. When I opened the study door she was pacing back and forth and reading: 'It is true that these plays collected and arranged by Freddy Fribble are universal; it is true that mothers of every color and race teach them to their children. Peek-a-boo and Patacake and Thumbs-up and Tip-toe'—or something like that,—'and many other finger and toe games are known everywhere; but our aim is to give mothers *insight* as to their underlying use. Add insight to instinct and you have the answer to the problem of infant education.' Er—that is about all I remember."

"I am glad it impressed you," remarked Peggy, half vexed at Paul's jocose presentation of her sacred theories.

"Why, it even impresses me," declared Doc Smith earnestly. "I believe your brother has given me the cue that I missed this morning."

Just at that moment a distant wail interrupted the table talk. Nell hastily excused herself and vanished nursery-ward.

"Gone to apply her 'theories,' I suppose," joked Doctor Smith.

"Well, they have to be adapted to each individual case, you know," admitted Jack, laughing. "And this youngster demands a lot of alterations."

"It's that new tooth," called Nell, appearing a moment later in the doorway, "and I shall have to give the boy a little petting and diverting to help him forget the grinding. Go right on,

please. Peggy can be hostess until I am able to leave Jackie again."

"Oh, Cousin Nell, let *me* do the diverting. It's just exactly the experience I need to report in my next 'essay on man'; and I don't want dessert and coffee, anyway. Please let me," begged Peggy.

Nell looked doubtful, but Jack nodded a decided approval to Peggy's suggestion. Peggy waited for no further permission. She waved a glad good-bye and skipped up the stairs, calling gaily to Littlejohn.

A half hour later, crackers and cheese, coffee and conversation concluded, Jack and Nell led the way softly to the nursery door. Doc Smith and Dick, Paul and Frank Arnold peeped in over the shoulders of the interested parents.

In a comfortable low rocker before the dull embers of the fireplace sat Peggy, swaying ever so slowly to and fro, her golden head drooping caressingly over Littlejohn's relaxed little body. As she rocked, she crooned softly a melody evidently of her own composing:

"Sleep, ma baby,
Shut yo' eye,
Sandman's comin'
Bye and bye.
Dusk o' evenin's
Drawin' nigh,
Sleep, ma baby,
Sleep.

"Hush, ma baby,
Hev no fear——"

The eavesdroppers at the door stole away on tiptoe and Peggy was none the wiser because of their visit. For another half hour she dreamed and hummed. Then she put Littlejohn gently into his own white crib, covered him up, slipped the protecting side into place, and stepped softly to Nell's desk in the adjoining room.

"And this morning I could not think of a thing to say on the 'influence of home environment'!" murmured Peggy, seizing a convenient pen and block of paper.

She wrote fast and furiously for a few minutes and then ran downstairs to join the group in the library. Paul and Dick were just outlining their plan for the Yellowstone trip and the others were following the route Paul's pencil traced on a big map.

"Is the young man asleep?" asked Doc Smith, a twinkle in his kindly blue eye.

"Oh, yes, long ago," replied Peggy. "And, oh, joy, I have an outline made out for my next 'theory' and a little lullaby for the Mother Play class, too. We are asked to do *quantities* of original work in the training school and it's almost impossible sometimes in the city. But I always find an inspiration out here at Cousin Nell's."

"I guess maybe I've found an inspiration out here, too," said Doc Smith. "See here, friends. Some of you know my little cottage up in Portsmouth. It has a good many rooms, take it all through, and wide piazzas, and a fair lawn, and I've got it into my head that I could make a sort of all-the-year-round resort of it for some of

Boston's kiddies,—the poor little, broken-up things, you know, who don't have half a fair chance to grow up straight 'n' strong."

He paused and looked at the silent group who had drawn closer to hear what he had to say. He saw deep interest in their intent faces, felt their unexpressed sympathy and went on, encouraged.

"This idea's been botherin' me more or less for some time, but since I visited the children's hospital with our friend, the M.D.," and he smiled at Frank Arnold, "it's really seemed feasible. Then when I saw the working of the kindergarten, 'Well,' I says to myself, 'a kindergartner to amuse and teach the convalescents, a young doctor to be medical adviser to the sick, and an old Bone-Setter,' meaning me, 'to straighten bent limbs,—that would make a pretty good staff.' Now what do *you* think about it, young man?"

He slapped Franklin Arnold on the knee and then sat back, waiting anxiously for his opinion.

The Young Doctor's face had kindled with enthusiasm as the old man talked and now he was ready with his reply.

"My opinion is that you've struck a grand idea, and my proposition is,"—Franklin sprang to his feet in his earnestness,—"to go in with you if you'll take me!"

"And, oh, dear, if I was only through my training, I'd ask to come, too," cried Peggy, clasping her hands in excitement. "But I can try to find some one for you."

Tears sprang to the old doctor's eyes. "And

you?" he asked of Jack and Nell and Dick. "Do you think it's something more than a foolish dream?"

"We think it's *splendid!*" said Nell feelingly.

"And we'll all find some way to help," added Dick.

"And I know a settlement that can supply you with all the broken babies you have room to house and time to mend," promised Jack, his heart stirred as he thought of his own little son upstairs in bed, safe and sound and unspeakably precious.

"Well," said Doc Smith, standing up briskly and looking at his watch, "there'll be a lot for me and my new partner to do, now that's settled. I'll trot off to bed and get my beauty sleep, and we'll start at the foundation right early to-morrow morning."

. . . . . .

It may be added here, since Doc Smith and his pet project so soon move back to Portsmouth and out of our range of vision, that the old man's dreams were destined to be realized in the course of time. He found it practical to have alterations made in his home while investigations were being instituted in the settlement, his protégés chosen, and his kindergarten director selected. But in the early fall following his visit to Boston, the institution opened its doors, and, notwithstanding many delightful and surprising intermediate happenings, the young medical advisor who stood at the old doctor's right hand was Franklin Arnold, M.D.

CHAPTER V.

LETTERS AND LINKS.

Peggy Bennett looked up from the letter she was reading with an expression of intense exasperation.

"Paul Bennett, will you hear this?" she demanded. "Mother writes that that miserable J. Q. Brownell has managed in some way to send another letter to Aunt Mary Brewster from *jail.* And what do you suppose? He says: 'Your clever friends have got me, but they haven't got what I know. What will you give to find out more?' She says they telegraphed that impudent note straight out to the Los Angeles detective, and he replied: 'If Brownell knows anything more, I'll get it out of him, if I have to resort to thumb screws and stocks!' He's just *daring* us all, Mother says. Isn't he the *very* limit?"

"Maybe he does know something," drawled Paul slowly, "he's a queer old schemer.—Well, there's the letter carrier's whistle again!"

"Mother's letter must have come in at noon," said Peggy, looking at the postmark.

"I'll run down and see if there is more mail," Paul volunteered, knowing that at that signal Peggy usually hung over the bannister until as-

sured that there was mail or no mail for the Bennetts.

"Oh, do!" cried Peggy. "There are sure to be letters Monday night, you know, and most of the girls are owing me just now. I paid all my dues that rainy Saturday we had about two weeks ago."

"You are in luck," was Paul's greeting when he returned, "six fat letters and a postal card. Shall I read them to you?"

"No, thank you, kind and thoughtful sir. But maybe I'll read them to you, 'if you're good.' "

"Pro-ceed," replied Paul as usual, making himself comfortable in the arm chair by the window and idly beginning to pencil a sketch of Peggy at her desk.

"The topmost one is from Marjorie Deming and I'll read that first."

Paul looked up and suspended his pencil at arm's length while Peggy ripped open the envelope with a green-handled dagger. "Let's see the postmark. . . . H'm. Left Liverpool only five days ago. Good work. What does she say?"

"M-m-m-m," murmured Peggy, dipping into the letter here and there. "Just a minute."

Paul waited, watching Peggy's absorption with lazy interest. He saw in his mind's eye the writer of the letter, the fair-haired, blue-eyed, pink-cheeked English girl whom they had met on their White Mountain trip three years before; and again he wished that some time he might paint a picture of her.

"Sort of a blue-gold, Burne-Jonesy effect," he reflected, recalling his earlier impression.

His pencil followed the trend of his thought and altered the sketch of Peggy to one of Marjorie Deming as he had seen her in the twilight at Hilton on her last summer's visit to them.

"Marjorie says that, although her father is coming to the States as usual this summer, it is very uncertain whether she will accompany him. Her little sister Midge—Elizabeth, you know—has been quite ill and they may take her to France or Italy to recuperate. In that case, Miss Harper would go along as companion and tutor and Marjorie couldn't come here without her."

"Too bad," commented Paul, narrowing his eyes and looking at his sketch critically.

"Well, I shall be disappointed not to see Marjorie, but I had been afraid we would miss her visit anyway if we went out to the Yellowstone. If we *don't* go—oh, but I can't believe we won't. If Mother will only consent to borrow a little from our 'education fund' and trust to our investments to make it up before it's needed, we can go."

"We wouldn't have to worry at all about the cash for the trip if those copper shares made good," remarked Paul, a little gloomily.

"No, but we can't say much to Mother about them. Uncle Ned supposed it was *bona fide,* gilt-edged stock when he advised Mother to buy for us. He has lost a lot more than we have if the copper mines never do pay, but he feels worse about our loss than his own, Mother says."

"Well, cheer up, Margaretta. Something is bound to turn up, as sure as my name is Wilkins

Micawber," promised Paul, swinging back into his customary optimistic vein. "Haven't you another letter to read?"

"Five more," replied Peggy, recovering her interest in her mail. "Here is one from Dorothy Lincoln,—shall I open that next?"

"I believe I recognized Nan Cumming's peculiar chirography on one envelope," drawled Paul provokingly.

"Well, Paul Bennett! I believe you tucked it under all the rest on purpose!" and Peggy drew out a letter from the very bottom of the pile. "Of course this is from Nan. She hardly ever fails to write me Sunday."

"She has quite recovered from her—ah—indisposed indiscretions, her unfortunate understandings, her—ah—failing friendliness of last year, has she? Ever get a hint of relapse?"

"Not a hint, Paul. Now keep still while I see what Nan says."

Peggy replied confidently, but to herself she sometimes confessed that last year's experience with Nan Cummings had shaken her faith. She not only felt a degree less sure of her own devotion to her oldest and dearest friend, but she found herself sometimes doubting Nan's present sincerity. And, more alarming still, perhaps, she was for the first time a little reluctant to give her full confidence to new acquaintances. There was Barbara Coolidge whose room was next to hers at Triple Nine,—she knew that Barbara was a thoroughly fine girl, and yet she couldn't quite accept Barbara's warm friendship.

Yes, Peggy's senior year at the Hilton Academy had left its marks,—its "scars," Peggy called them to herself. Nan had hurt her cruelly, had made her suffer almost an entire year needlessly. And the cause? Nothing in the world but jealousy and its sister, suspicion. Nan had imagined that Peggy "looked down upon" her friend, Dorothea Manning of Springfield Hall; and out of that tiny seed of faithlessness had grown a bitter crop of unkind thoughts and words and actions. And Peggy had been overwhelmed by it. It was the first time her friendly world had played her false, and the experience had, indeed, left "scars," although the cause and the irritation had been removed by Nan's confession and final apology.

But, anxious to maintain the impression that all *was* well between them, Peggy tried to force into flame the embers of her old devotion; and she succeeded in deceiving Paul, although she sometimes felt that her mother was unconvinced.

"You may read Nan's letter yourself, Paul," Peggy said at length, looking up from the epistle that had absorbed her attention.

"Thanks," he replied, leaning forward to take it. "That will give you time to look at your postal—from New York."

Peggy flushed a little under Paul's scrutiny as she took up a card displaying a picture of Brooklyn Bridge and read its brief message, signed "P. H."

Paul bent over Nan's letter and made out with some difficulty its contents:

WELLESLEY COLLEGE,
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS,
May —, 19—.

DEAR OLD PEGGY,—

Would you ever believe that I have been *nearly a year* in college? I am hardly used to saying "College" yet. You know I did call it the "Academy" twice last fall and was *so* humiliated.

That was while I was so dreadfully homesick—oh, I nearly *died!* I couldn't see anything particularly *glowing* about college life then. But now, while we are just buried up to our *ears* in work, why, *everybody* works, and then we have simply *glorious* times after the work is over to repay us.

I have written you about some of the *lovely* girls I have met and how much I'd like to have you meet them, too. I see your friend Willa Turner quite often. She is senior class president and a very popular girl.

I wish you might have been here for the Mayday hoop-rolling and little-girl sports—it was *great* fun,—but you simply must come out before college closes, and while the rhododendrons are in bloom if you can.

It is not so very far away, only fourteen miles from Boston, and I should love to see you. It seems an *age* since we were home for the Christmas holidays.

Now listen! My Saturday afternoons, Wednesday afternoons and all day Monday are free. You choose the time that suits you best, write what train you'll take, and I'll have Tom meet you at the station and bring you up if I can't get away myself. ("Tom" drives a rig that meets the trains and I'll tell him to look for a pretty blue-eyed girl with goldilocks curling 'round her face,—so be sure to wear your goldilocks that day!)

Tell Brother Paul that next time I'll send an invitation

to him, too, but that will be for a more *'special* occasion—when he won't be the only man among a thousand girls! Still, maybe he wouldn't mind *that.* He probably would gaze at them all till he sized up the most *charming type* and then say, "Come, stroll down to Longfellow Pond with me, away from these chattering magpies and I'll sketch your lovely profile silhouetted against a silvery birch."

Would he? Or would he only *wish* he could?

Well, anyway, *you* are to come, Peggy Bennett. Now don't you fail me.

I am going straight out to invite some girls to tea in your honor. So, now, you'll *have* to come. It would *never* do to disappoint them.

I shall look for a favorable reply by *return mail!*

Azzever,

NAN.

Paul looked up from the letter and chuckled.

"College hasn't changed Nan Cummings—yet," he remarked, "at least so far as penmanship and emphasis are concerned. And she writes as she talks. You might tell her that 'Brother Paul' lives in the hope of meeting a thousand girls. Gee-rusalem! what a prospect!" And Paul flipped the letter over to Peggy's desk.

But Peggy paid no attention to his comments. She finished another letter that she had begun, and then looked up with glowing eyes.

"Oh, Paul, what *jolly* times girls do have in college! This is from the Kendalls at Smith. They've written alternate paragraphs that sound for all the world just like the C-C's themselves. Listen. Corinne begins:

Dear Princess Peg,

Collette wanted to start this letter and tell you about the Circus but I reminded her gently that I was the older and had *premier* rights, so she subsided and allowed me to begin. We gave the Circus a week ago and think Mr. P. T. Barnum himself might have learned something from us. The performers were just the girls in the House with no audience except Miss Evans, our matron. One of the girls dressed up as the hand-organ man with 'Bobs,' i. e., Miss Evans' little black-and-tan dog, for a monkey. Two others were Indians and gave a famous war dance. One of the girls led in two bears (which were in reality two girls in couch covers) and these performed!—climbed a pole and danced.

Now it's my turn. I'm Collette. I insist on telling about the fat lady and the thin lady. They were my Slender Sister Corinne and a girl from New Jersey. They looked——

Never mind how we *looked.* (This is Corinne again. Collette takes too long to express herself!) We were ashamed of ourselves, when we were ready to go on exhibition, and I'm sure we ought to have been. We did look shocking. Even Bobs howled when we appeared. But never mind that now. After our show was over we had peanuts and lemonade——

And then (the younger Kendall has the pen again at last!) it was time to go to bed, but we didn't go. When the clock struck ten several of the girls were lingering in our room and we got into a discussion about religion, disagreeing vehemently, of course.

Disagreeing! Collette puts it mildly. Well, after a while the lights went out, but not the fire of conversation. So I lighted a candle to illuminate the argument and we were still talking when we heard Miss Evans coming up-

stairs. I was already gowned for the night, so I jumped into bed and one of the girls leaped in with me, kimono and all. Collette dragged another with her into a closet, and the fifth girl flattened herself behind the door. So when Miss Evans looked in, everything was all right.

Later: We've been discussing and Corinne says we've got to put something in this letter besides nonsense or you'll get a wrong idea of Smith, so I said, "Let's tell her about our trip to Deerfield." And Corinne said, "Good! I bet Peggy never went there if she is such a tireless traveler." So——

I did not say, "I *bet.*" The idea! And me a Freshman at Smith! I said, "I venture to say"!

We'll let it go at that, Peggy, or Corinne will never permit me to finish my paragraph. She's real hoggish with this pen. Well, ten of us went up to Old Deerfield the other day, and it is certainly the most interesting old place you can imagine. Probably you know, but I didn't, that there was a terrible Indian Massacre there once and so many dead bodies were cast into one of the streams that it was given the name "Bloody Brook."

That's what I call a horrid detail, but Collette would put it in. Now *I* liked the Museum and the House with a Secret Stairway and the Guild of the Rug Makers and the old guide post "To Albany." But most of all I loved the quaint old village streets reposing so peacefully in the shade of their wonderful trees. There wasn't much actual shade the other day, but you could imagine what it would be in midsummer. Then the valley itself with the shimmering Connecticut——

Corinne is getting poetic, so I'll have to butt in or you'll never hear how we went to see Cousin Will Kendall at Wesleyan last month and attended Junior Dramatics, Sophomore Reception and ball game. We had quite an

exciting time getting started, for the other girls declared it was too much for us to be obliged to carry our suit cases unaided all the way to the station. So half a dozen went along to do it for us. We noticed that they seemed especially hilarious but didn't quite understand what it meant until just as we were getting on the train they showered us with rice! It got into our hair and everywhere and we were a good joke for the whole car. Then while we were waiting for the train to start, the girls stood on the platform and shouted advice: "Don't spill your tea! Don't tip your soup plate! Be sure to use your fork! And be *sure* whatever else you may do not to forget to conduct yourselves like intelligent gentlewomen!"

Corinne is at the window watching guests arrive for the Glee Club Sing this afternoon and the Junior Prom. to-night, I'll write her paragraph this time. There is so much excitement in the air we can't bring ourselves to study so we have tried forgetting it by writing to you. You see, there is only one other time during the year that is set aside as an occasion for entertaining men visitors, so of course every one makes the most of this day when it comes.

I was going to tell you more about our visit to Wesleyan, but Corinne says we've got to go over to the library and study where we can't see the guests arrive even if we want to. So I'll just add that what we enjoyed most in Middletown was our visit to the fraternity house. The men were so very hospitable and "brotherly" that we felt we were guests of the whole fraternity instead of two members of it:—Will and his roommate, who is Ted Williams from Hilton, you know.

I've sent Collette to borrow a book for me, so I'll end this long letter myself by saying that we want you to

spend a week end here before college closes. Choose your week end, but come. You simply *must*. You'd love it here, Miss Evans and "Bobs" included. Let us know which Saturday to expect you.

CORINNE KENDALL (for both C—C's).

"Oh, wouldn't I like to go!" sighed Peggy, folding the closely written sheets reluctantly.

"Well, why can't you?" replied Paul briefly.

Peggy shook her head slowly and opened another letter. She read it to herself and then gave a little gesture of despair.

Paul grinned understandingly. "I suppose Dorothy Lincoln has invited you to spend a few days at Mt. Holyoke, also before college closes."

"She has," nodded Peggy solemnly. "And she wants you to come to a class play, too."

"And I'll bet that Junior Ford has asked you out to Harvard. See if he hasn't."

Peggy ripped open the last envelope, read the note it contained and handed it to Paul:

DEAR PEGGY,—

Can't you and Paul come out to Vespers and go canoeing at Riverside this week or next? Ask your cousin, Mrs. Thornton, or some other friend to come, too. Let me know when, and I'll meet you where you say. I'm off to attend a debate.

Sincerely,

JOHN FORD, Junior.

P. S. Have written my friend Franklin Arnold, whom I understand you have met, to come out when you do. I hear that he intends to leave Boston next fall. Please ask Paul to 'phone him your decision and the date.—J. F., Jr.

"Well, why can't we go there?" asked Paul cheerfully, returning the letter to Peggy.

"Everything takes money," she rejoined mournfully.

"Pshaw! Forget it! It won't cost anything to accept this last invitation. The carfare out to Cambridge is a mere nothing. I can even afford to take you myself," and Paul jingled the few coins in his pocket encouragingly.

"Oh, of course we can go there—and we will,—but look at these other perfectly splendid invitations! They're simply dazzling opportunities to see the colleges and meet the kind of people we'd like to know,—and we just *can't* unless we break into our travel fund and say goodbye to Yellowstone!"

"Oh, it isn't so bad as that," said Paul comfortably. "We've got our allowances."

"Oh, have we?" retorted Peggy. "Two dollars a week for unforeseen incidentals doesn't make me feel particularly affluent. Last week I had to buy a song book and a new fountain pen, and this week I'm expected to pay for a course ticket to Susannah Ballou's lectures. How much can you lend me?" And Peggy's eyes twinkled as she held out her open palm.

"Well," hesitated Paul, fairly caught, "to tell the truth——"

"Which comes hard," prompted Peggy.

"I didn't carry any balance over and I'm owing Link Green for some pencils he let me have last week. But——"

"But before this week is over you will also need some India ink or crayons or newly dis-

covered pigments or a different kind of sketching paper or——"

"But, Peggy, I need 'em for my *trade,*" protested Paul.

"Then get 'em, but *don't* get 'em in advance of your income," she replied, becoming very, very earnest. "And if you must borrow, borrow of me and not of Link Green or Brown or White or Black or any other tint or shade. Mother won't stand for that, and you know it."

"Well," Paul said, shifting uncomfortably in his chair, "it's something all the time—and two dollars! What are *two dollars?*"

"All you'll get for extrys!—And I'm ashamed of us. We've no right to kick at all when Mummie's doing so much for us and keeping her weather eye on our future, besides. Suppose she gave us all we really wanted to spend this year? Our education fund wouldn't bear the strain very long, and then where would we be?"

"Digging ditches in Dixie or clearing Culebra Cut, maybe, but not painting masterpieces," admitted Paul, stretching wearily. Money was a very tiresome subject. "Well, are you going to turn down the whole bunch of bids?" he added, rising and giving Peggy's hair a brotherly pull.

Peggy's face fell. She lost wholly the expression of defender, accuser and exhorter, and looked again just the dejected schoolgirl that she was.

"I *can't* refuse them—yet," she declared. "I'm just going to make believe for this one night that I'm going to accept them *all!*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE LUCK OF A BORROWED STAR.

The possibility of visiting the colleges seemed just as remote to Peggy the next morning and all the next day. To add to her general depression the early mail brought an invitation to the Yale-Harvard boat race from Harry Bentley, Helen's brother, with the suggestion that observation train tickets would be available for Paul and herself if they cared for them.

Perhaps it is not strange that Peggy's discipline was very poor that morning when she attempted to give a third gift lesson under the eye of Miss Pratt, her director, nor that she failed to state a satisfactory definition for the word "science" in the afternoon session at the training school.

By night she was looking at the world through smoked glasses, her head was aching and she was undeniably cross. When Paul joined her in their study just before dinner, she had no smile nor word of greeting for him, and he wisely decided to let her alone.

As the dinner gong sounded, however, and he started to glance into the great-grandmother mirror, his eye fell upon the corner of an envelope that was almost hidden by the pillows on the couch.

"What's this?" he asked. "Another—ah—invitation discarded in disdain?"

Peggy paused impatiently at the door. "I don't know what it is, if you ask me. Didn't you put it there yourself? Is this a joke?"

"Not mine," replied Paul, picking up the letter. "Hello! It's a special delivery—from Mother."

"From *Mother?*" Peggy closed the door and sank down on the couch beside Paul while he tore open the envelope.

Two blue money orders fell out and a slip of paper fluttered to the floor. Paul seized the money orders and Peggy jumped for the note.

"'DEAR CHILDREN,'" she read. "'Copper is turning into gold, after all! Must share the good news at once. Can go to Yellowstone as planned. Enclose a V for each of you as a thank offering. Maybe there is some luxury you have longed for that you can have now. It is yours to save or spend. I'm going to celebrate later. Will write details soon.

"'Lovingly,

"'MOTHER.'"

Peggy thrust the note into Paul's hands and flung herself down on the pillows. Her shoulders heaved convulsively and her golden head burrowed deep into the cushions.

"Talk about luck!" quoth Paul cheerfully. "Didn't I tell you something would turn up?"

"I s-s'pose Helen would say it was her s-star," said Peggy, sitting up suddenly and drying her tears.

"Prophesied three surprises, didn't she? Well,

that bunch of invitations was one, this letter is another, and——"

Rat-a-tat-tat! Some one was tapping on the door.

"Are you there?" cried the voice of Peggy's third-floor neighbor, Barbara Coolidge. "I volunteered to run up and tell you that you had a caller," she added as Peggy opened the door. "It's a young man—tall, dark-eyed and altogether splendid!"

"You mean it's some one for Paul, don't you?" asked Peggy, puzzled at Barbara's emphasis.

"No, he asked particularly for *Miss* Bennett. You see I was just going down to dinner as he arrived. I overheard and offered to come up as the maid was needed in the dining room. Truly he is a wonder."

"Didn't he give you his name?" asked Peggy a little suspiciously, for the girls at Triple Nine were fond of pranks and practical jokes, and it was not long since some of them had borrowed the men's coats and hats and sent up men's calling cards to Peggy and Barbara.

"There, I do believe he handed Maggie a card! She probably trotted down to Mrs. Barnes with it! I'm awfully sorry, Peggy. Can't you even guess who it might be?"

Barbara turned away and then called back. "You found your Special Delivery, didn't you? I left it here when you were out this afternoon."

"We found it," said Paul.

"That explains it," echoed Peggy, slipping the letter into her desk. "But, Paul, who do you sup-

pose is the caller downstairs? I'm still sceptical."

"Oh, probably it's Frank Arnold," said Paul. "Come on, I'll go down, too. We'll ask him to stay to dinner."

But when Paul and Peggy went into the dimly lighted drawing-room it was not the Young Doctor who rose from a gilt chair by the mirror and advanced to meet them.

Peggy's heart skipped a beat with surprise.

"Why, Mr. Huntington!" she exclaimed, recovering herself and stepping forward with her hand outstretched in welcome.

"Well, this *is* a surprise!" echoed Paul. "We're mighty glad to see you."

"I'm mighty glad to be here," rejoined Price Huntington heartily. "I've been on the way more or less indefinitely ever since I heard that you were revolving about at the Hub of Learning. But a man who stands at the foot of the ladder waiting for chances to climb can't afford to turn down any that come his way. So I've been tied hand and foot in New York till now; but here I am at last."

"And we are so glad to see you," cried Peggy, finding words as he paused.

"Now I have only this evening and to-morrow afternoon, and then I must get back to Manhattan," resumed the young man. "I happened to see a big advertisement of a travel lecture for to-night as I came through the subway. I noticed that the outline covered the route we followed together last summer and I ventured to secure four tickets on the chance of your having

a free evening and a friend who might care to go, too."

"It ought to be Helen Bentley," Paul declared at once. "She wished this luck on us."

"Then you'll go? And can we all dine somewhere together first? You probably know some quiet little place between here and the Hall where this lecture is to be given."

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Peggy delightedly. "We do, and we'll go. Paul shall telephone Helen while I get ready. I won't be a minute!"

Price Huntington smiled with satisfaction as Peggy danced away to dress, and Paul rang up the number of Helen's boarding place.

"Now, this is fine," he mused. "Some girls would have taken half an hour to decide to go and another half hour to prepare to go, and the evening would have been nearly gone, too, before we had begun to enjoy it. She hasn't changed a bit, bless her. She struck me as having a great capacity for enjoyment when we were touring."

Then his mind ran back over the chain of events that had led him to this quiet haven in St. Peter's Place. He caught a quick breath and lived over again the exciting moment at San Bernardino the previous summer when it had seemed to him that Peggy Bennett must surely slip under the heavy wheels of the Special train before he could lift her to safety. Yet the miracle had happened. It had been given him to save the life that for an instant he had held in the hollow of his hand. His own life had gained a new dignity because at the crucial time he had been willing if necessary to give it for hers, and her life

—his gift—made Peggy's existence a matter of moment to him.

The full significance of all this Price Huntington did not realize even now, ten months after the thrilling experience. He was not a psychologist like young Doctor Arnold, but he knew that he was glad to be here. For the present, that was enough, since she, too, seemed glad.

And as he waited for Peggy's return, the tension of nerves drawn taut by his professional ambitions and the city's rush and roar relaxed. A spirit of restful content, of boyish pleasure, of happy anticipation possessed him.

Two hours later the four young people—for Helen Bentley had been easily persuaded to give up her work on a monologue for the pleasure of hearing a travelogue—were seated in the dimness of a huge lecture hall watching upon the motion-picture screen the slow emergence of the peaks of the Grand Cañon from the darkness of night to the splendor of dawn and the full glory of day.

"It is the sunrise we missed," whispered Peggy, and Price Huntington nodded silently.

Then figures began to move here and there on the rim of the yawning chasm; lean, muscular horses loped up to the steps of the familiar El Tovar Hotel; girls and men in broad-brimmed hats and khaki sprang into the saddles and disappeared from view. For a few moments the matchless gorges and pyramids of the Cañon, the winding Colorado River and its rapids and pools were pictured on the great canvas. Finally the watchers were able to discern a narrow, zig-zag

trail among the peaks that revealed and hid itself by turns. Then came the nodding heads of horses bearing bent figures shaded by wide sombreros. The distant cavalcade came nearer and suddenly around an abrupt curve in the centre foreground appeared a head and shoulders that looked strangely familiar. The head was lifted with a characteristic motion, and Paul Bennett's good-humored eyes looked straight into the eyes of the audience!

Peggy gave one convulsive start and grasped the arm of the real Paul at her side, but she was powerless to wrench her gaze from the well-remembered group that slowly climbed into sight. For the time being she was back on Bright Angel Trail watching the slow, somewhat painful return of their own party. With her was Willa Turner, whose brother Ward, like Paul, had gone on horseback to the depths of the Cañon.

Yes, there was Ward Turner, his drooping hat turned back from his face and his "Sunny Jim" smile just breaking forth at some weary jest from the rider behind him. And that rider proved to be a woman—Madelene Brown—hardly able to keep her saddle, but still clinging mechanically to the bridle as she swayed from side to side.

Behind Madelene rode Dick Hunter, and behind Dick came some one whom Peggy had barely met at that time, Price Huntington, whose astonishment at this revelation of the program exceeded her own.

For Peggy, be it remembered, had seen the

moving picture expert busy with his camera when she and Willa Turner wandered down the trail. But she had never expected to see her wish fulfilled and actually be present at the unrolling of that very film.

When the lights blazed up at the conclusion of the "travelogue," and the three who had seen their own experiences so vividly reproduced were making excited comments on the strangeness of the coincidence, Helen Bentley remarked, "What did I tell you about real life beating the drama on thrilling situations? If you had seen this thing—this coincidence—worked out on the stage, you would have said it was only Fate in the hands of the playwright, that things didn't happen that way in real life. They do—a hundred times a day—but usually we see only one phase—one half of a situation, and through busy-ness, or blindness or mere indifference we lose the other half—the *key*."

Helen spoke with unusual earnestness and Price Huntington, who first caught her real meaning, nodded in understanding.

"Just the other day," Helen went on, "there was a big fire in a tenement house. A college fellow happened to be in the neighborhood and saw the first flames signaling from an upper window. He gave the alarm and then ran up to the top floor himself. He burst into a room filled with smoke and found a sick woman in the arms of a girl who was trying to get her out safely. He grabbed the woman and carried her until he met the first fireman coming upstairs. Then he ran back for the girl. When he reached

the sidewalk and had a chance to look into her face, he found he had saved his own sister."

"Helen!" ejaculated Peggy incredulously.

"Yes; as a Settlement worker she'd been visiting the poor woman, and the fire caught her there."

"After that, the mere seeing ourselves as movie actors is plain matter of fact," remarked Paul. "But believe me, I was some surprised!"

"Didn't I foretell some surprises?" laughed Helen, dropping her serious mood like an unaccustomed garment.

"We've had nothing but surprises for two days," rejoined Peggy. "Helen, I *believe* in your star!"

BOOK II.—WORKING WESTWARD.

CHAPTER VII.

AUNT MARY.

Aunt Mary Brewster peeped again into the looking-glass of her old-fashioned bureau and patted her softly crinkled hair each side of its even parting. She adjusted once more the big cameo-pin that caught together the folds of a delicate silk fichu brought from China years before and worn still on state occasions. She brushed a wee thread from the sleeve of her black satin dress and smoothed down the skirt with thin, strong fingers.

"Why, I'm as foolish as a young girl whose beau is coming to call," she thought, smiling at her own fidgeting. "But I never really expected to be giving another party and I guess I am just a little bit excited about it."

Aunt Mary was not the only one in the little white house in Hilton who was excited over the prospect of the party. Hovering, pink-cheeked and big-eyed, over the dining table that had been extended to its limit and decorated with Aunt Mary's best gilt-edged china and finest linen, was Helen Norton, once known to the crowd of Hilton Academy girls as "the Unhappy Freshman." Now no trace of unhappiness clung to her. A

new light was in her eyes, a new song on her lips, a new gladness in her heart, for Helen Norton had found her niche and was joyously filling it.

The previous fall—having just entered upon her Senior year in the Academy—Helen had found herself in the unenviable position of a girl who must leave school and support herself but has no idea how to go about it. The family fortunes had not mended since the long-ago day when Helen had mourned so wildly and quarrelled so bitterly over the accidental spotting of a new blue gown,—nor were they likely to improve. Her father had become more and more discouraged and consequently less successful in business, and her mother had finally succumbed to the double strain of work and worry, and found rest beneath a simple stone in the hillside cemetery.

It was at this juncture that Mrs. Bennett, the twins' mother, had learned of Helen's predicament. In her popular but unsolicited rôle of "Most Gracious Lady," Mrs. Bennett was quite liable to hear first and last most of the village woes. And to hear of need, in her case, was to try to help the needy.

So it was not strange that Mrs. Bennett had Helen in mind one evening when she said to Aunt Mary Brewster at the end of a long, serious conversation, "Well, Aunt Mary, if you feel you really cannot give up your own home,—and I can't blame you, although I did want you so much to share mine,—let me make a suggestion: You needn't live alone and you needn't have 'hired help,' but do have a school girl or some

woman friend or some needy neighbor come to live with you here. There must be some one who needs you as much as you need her."

"Well, maybe," Aunt Mary had admitted, drawing her little black shawl more closely around her thin shoulders.

She sometimes confessed to herself that it *was* lonely in the little house when the nights were dark and windy and a shutter blew loose, or when she woke early and longed for a cup of hot tea and there was no one but herself to rise and brew it. And yet Aunt Mary clung so to her little home! It was all she had left, and it seemed dearer since she had been given a ray of hope that her son Judson—a wanderer for thirty years—might even yet come back to her!

No one, not Mrs. Bennett herself, knew that Aunt Mary had established a new custom since she learned that Judson had been in Seattle the year before and was supposed to have taken a train east. It was this: each evening at dark Aunt Mary placed a lighted lamp on a table close by the upstairs window that overlooked the path to the front door. There it burned until dawn. And beside it each night until she could persuade herself to go to bed, Aunt Mary was accustomed to sit, her gray head touched by the halo of light as she bent over the knitting or sewing in her busy hands.

Neighbors who passed would sometimes lift their eyes to the window and say, "Aunt Mary is up late to-night." But while many knew her sorrow and sympathized with her anxiety, none realized how she listened nightly for the step

that might be Judson's and for the voice that might be his, inquiring, "Is this the house?"

So it had come to pass, through the interest and intervention of Mrs. Bennett, that the need of Aunt Mary Brewster had met the need of Helen Norton, and the problems of both had been solved. Aunt Mary had kept her home, and Helen had been able to complete her last year at the Academy, living under Aunt Mary's roof, giving her loving service, and yet not wholly forgetting the unfortunate father who had gone to live with a scarcely more fortunate brother in a neighboring town.

On this evening of the party at Aunt Mary's —in which Mrs. Bennett was co-operating—the relations between Mrs. Brewster and Helen were warm and friendly, and each felt moved to congratulate herself as she busily prepared for the festivity.

"Helen is growing dearer to me every day," the sweet old lady before the mirror was thinking. "How fortunate I am to have her!"

"Aunt Mary is so good to me," the flushed, happy girl was saying aloud as she turned up all the lights. "What a lucky girl I am!"

A loud peal of the door-bell called them both to greet the first guests, who proved to be "Skinny" Lincoln and his sister Dorothy, both home for summer vacation from the colleges where they were earning part of their expenses,—or as Skinny cheerfully expressed it, "beating their way through with garden tools, furnace shovels, and dish rags."

Next came Biff and Bess Buffington, Mrs.

Bennett and Paul and Peggy, and a half-dozen others who trailed in just behind them.

After the buzz of welcome for this crowd had died down a little, it burst out afresh over the arrival of Christopher Crane and Helen Bentley, Ted and Claire Williams, Junior Ford, Nan Cummings and Dorothea Manning of Springfield Hall,—the latter overjoyed to be in Hilton again.

In fact, the invitations for this informal gathering—like those to Nan's party the summer before—had been simply extended to "everybody"—which was rightly interpreted to mean all the Hilton Academy crowd who knew Helen Norton and the Bennett twins,—for whom Aunt Mary and Mrs. Bennett were giving this party.

"D'you know, Bess," Biff Buffington remarked as he and his sister watched the glowing face of Helen Norton and her quick, eager services for Aunt Mary Brewster, "d'you know, I'd never recognize Helen Norton as the same girl you used to call 'the Unhappy Freshman'? Are you sure it's her?"

"I'm sure it's *she,*" retorted Bess with emphasis. "But, goodness me, look at that!" She clutched Biff's coat sleeve suddenly.

"Look at what?" echoed Biff, puzzled and almost alarmed at the change of expression in her face.

"That!" gasped Bess, her eyes still fixed on Helen Norton.

Biff saw nothing strange about Helen. She seemed merely to be extending the courtesies to

a group of the girls, chatting with them, he thought, over a book of snapshots.

"She's got her arm—around—Helen—*Bentley!*" ejaculated Bess, still in a stupor of amazement.

"O-oh! I seem to remember," remarked Biff thoughtfully.

"To my certain knowledge," whispered Bess solemnly, "she has not spoken to Helen Bentley for nearly *four years!*"

A hush had gradually fallen upon the room as the significance of this moment dawned upon other observers. The color flooded Helen Norton's cheeks, but she held her ground bravely. The hand on Helen Bentley's shoulder trembled, however, and betrayed the tumult of her feelings.

Helen Bentley, the Imp, always impulsive, always dramatic, was deeply touched. She determined to share the sudden prominence into which her quondam enemy had been thrust and to draw the fire of the many curious eyes from the other Helen to herself. Abruptly she turned and placed her hands on Helen Norton's shoulders. Then her clear, well-trained voice rang out in the stillness, paraphrasing a quotation familiar to them all:

> "Brutus was Cæsar's friend,—
> Thou wert not mine,
> But henceforward let there be nothing
> between us
> Save love and unbreakable friendship."

Spontaneous applause burst from the boys, and under cover of it, Peggy Bennett and Bess

Buffington, moved by a common impulse, caught the hands of the girls nearest and began to sing the old hymn that had once seemed such a travesty when these two had sung from one book the oft-repeated refrain:

Live in love, oh, live in love.

As soon as the verse was ended, Helen Norton exclaimed, "The spot did come out, Imp Bentley, just as you said it would. It never showed at all!"

So at last, after nearly four years, the girls' kindly inquiries about the fate of the blue dress were answered.

"And I see you've got another gown of the same heavenly blue," answered the Imp, impishly.

"For the first time," responded Helen Norton, looking down at it blissfully.

"And it just matches your eyes," caroled Peggy Bennett, happy at this outcome of the quarrel she had so often wished would end.

After this, gaiety again prevailed, a bubbling, running-over gaiety, the kind that springs only from absolutely carefree, happy hearts.

Later in the evening when the noise of many voices mingling had subsided into the quiet that broods over ice-cream, cakes and candies, the conversation turned naturally to the summer and vacation plans.

"What are *you* going to do, Skinny?" some one asked the always popular Phil Lincoln.

"Drive the little machine as usual. 'This way,

ladies and gentlemen! Take you home for a quarter. Baggage extra. *This* way, sir!'" replied Phil, gesticulating extravagantly as if to induce incoming travelers to patronize his little runabout,—the same staunch little runabout that had been his reward for saving Nell Thornton's life in the days when she was still Nell Hunter.

"And who will be your assistant, now that Fred Winter is away?" questioned Mrs. Bennett.

"I," spoke up Phil's sister Dorothy, promptly. "I have learned to run the machine alone. Father says that Phil is not the only member of the family who has inherited his taste for mechanics. He will recommend me, too, if anybody hesitates to engage me."

"Speaking of Fred Winter," remarked Mrs. Bennett reminiscently, "we are hoping to see him and Burton Lorimer when we stop at West Point next month."

"You really are going there!" exclaimed Helen Bentley. "I certainly envy you. And then you go on to the Yellowstone?"

"Yes, those are our plans," was the smiling reply.

"Do you know how Fred Winter likes it at West Point?" asked Bess Buffington. "I heard that he was hazed till he fainted away. Is that true?"

"Nonsense," called Paul Bennett from his corner, where he was busily making a design with macaroons on Dorothea Manning's Japanese napkin. "That's what the papers call 'gross exaggeration.'"

"I can tell you exactly how Fred likes it." It

was Aunt Mary's gentle voice that hushed the eager discussion. "Helen, dear, please fetch me my velvet reticule."

When Helen Norton had brought the quaint velvet bag of Chinese embroidery, Aunt Mary took from it a letter, saying, "Fred has written me this time, but I'll share the news with you all, if you'd like to hear it."

"Yes, yes."

"Let's hear it, please."

"And then we must go home, for it is getting late," added Mrs. Bennett, as Aunt Mary's tall clock struck eleven.

And so it came about that the reading of Fred Winter's letter took the place of the usual songs and games and ended the party at Aunt Mary's.

This was the letter:

West Point, New York,
July —, 19—.

Dear Aunt Mary,—

You can't guess how surprised I was to receive a letter from *you!* I have read it more than once since it came. It makes me feel as though you really cared what became of a fellow here,—not just how he liked a military life nor how many hours he had to study.

I had to laugh when you asked if they gave us good food and if our little iron cots were really comfortable. Why, Aunt Mary, we get so hungry we could eat hay and so tired we could sleep on a board, so we're not very critical at "chow" or bedtime.

You say the Bennett twins told you that I had a hard time as a pleb. Well, Aunt Mary, I could spin you a yarn about soirées,—but what's the use? They say they

are good for us, and surely we can hardly recognize ourselves as the same men who entered the institution a year ago. When we look at the new class, we realize what bracing and eagling and chinning, the stretcher, the "Wooden-Willy" and "Pleb Rest" have done for us,—and what it's going to do for them!

Some of your questions remind me of a man who visited here not long ago and seemed to think we trod a smooth path covered with roses. He said, "West Point life must be an ideal life." In the course of the next half hour I did much to dispel his illusions and to present our life in its true colors, i. e., one continuous grind of hard, unremitting work, both with brain and body. A person might be set to thinking by glancing over the list of men who are "found" (those who fail to pass examinations) or who resign. Cadets resign only for cause, and usually it is that the amount of work and the strict discipline have combined to shake their nerve and they haven't the perseverance to stick it out. A love for army life, the chances for advancement to those who have ability and perseverance, and the desire to improve one's mind and body to the utmost are the only inducements to keep a young man working his way through this Academy.

As for the romance and novelty of the life, three weeks will settle that forever. A pleb in camp lives with the one hope: "Barracks." In barracks, he lives for yearling camp. In yearling camp, his one thought is—"One year till furlough!"

This much I know from experience, while from hearsay I know that the returned furloughman sees only graduation in the dim distance. In between, he must grit his teeth, take things as they come, and trust to his ability as a "specoid" to get through examinations safely.

Well, you asked me to tell you how we lived "tenting

on the old camp ground." Of course you heard Burton Lorimer talk about camp when he was home on furlough last year, and yet the experiences of each class are bound to be different,—so here goes for mine:

To go back to the first of June. On that date ours was still a plebeian class, but there were many debates among us as to when we should become yearlings. The first class said June eighth, three days after the new class of plebs came; but we determined it should be June fifth, at the latest.

Finally after some deliberation the first class said June fifth, also. The time was directly after the battalion returned from supper. The first captain said, "The new first and second classes would like to meet the new third class immediately after breaking ranks. Dismiss your companies."

Immediately pandemonium broke loose. Old grievances were obliterated in the twinkling of an eye. Plebs were shaking hands with and cheering for men whom they swore never to speak to when we were recognized. Old scores were forgotten entirely, and there was more of the feeling of hearty friendship and goodwill in two minutes than I have ever seen before in two hours.

Then the classes got together and exchanged yells and finally united in the corps yell. Aunt Mary, that was some noise! It ended in the big rush, during which the first and second classes tried to push the new third class through the sally port.

The first week in June was devoted to examinations and to exhibition drills before the Board of Visitors. The prettiest thing on the program was the "Escort of the Colors." During this drill the cadets did some of the finest, most accurate marching ever witnessed in the history of the institution.

The most exciting drill was the sham battle. An appearance of reality was added by having several men fall out as though wounded or killed and by the work of the Ambulance Corps in picking up the bodies.

Of course we had to work hard but the change from old routine made the week enjoyable to all of us.

The furlough hop took place June ninth. I was scared to death, for you know, Aunt Mary, I'd never danced with a "femme" and thought I'd tie things up cold. (That doesn't sound any worse than I felt!) But fortune favored me, my courage rose, and when the affair was over, I found that I had enjoyed twenty-four dances!

You can't imagine what a pretty sight the hop room was. I wish you could have been in the gallery and looked down upon the crowded floor. It was brilliant with fine dresses and officers' and cadets' dress uniforms, with here and there a "cit"—just a plain, black-garbed citizen, Aunt Mary,—to make some slight contrast and emphasize the differences.

This hop broke up at one o'clock A. M. and we went home to sleep five hours and then prepare to move to camp. Orders were issued that the first and third classes should march into camp at nine A. M. Thus between six A. M. and nine we had to do some quick work in order to prepare our household goods for transportation.

Promptly at nine o'clock the battalion was formed in full dress under arms and with the band playing and flags flying, we marched away from barracks and up to the site of our summer camp. All the officers' tents were already up, but we put up our own. Upon reaching camp, the companies were marched into their company streets, arms stacked, and then we set to work. In forty-five minutes every tent in camp was raised, and by twelve o'clock all

our goods were in place and things were in very fair order.

Now, I suppose, you will think we began to loaf. But not at all. We had expected that, as usual, we should have a couple of weeks to recuperate, but the commandant immediately issued orders for a course of long, tedious, tiresome drills in advance and rear-guard and exterior guard work, varied every Thursday by a practice march of from ten to fifteen miles. In the course of these drills, we are being instructed in the manner of protecting a marching army from surprise in front, flank, or rear, and of protecting an encampment from surprise by the enemy; this includes building shelter pits with a small entrenching spade which is part of our equipment.

We also have drill in pitching all the different kinds of tents used in the army of the United States.

You will see from this that my yearling camp is no picnic, and yet we manage to get our bit of fun with the new plebs. We make them brace, drag in their chins and dig in their toes; we toss them in blankets, duck them in the swimming tank, drag them out of bed at night, force them into pillow fights and roll them into Fort Clinton ditch. In short, we make their lives about as miserable as ours have been made the past year.

Now don't shake your head at me, Aunt Mary. I know your eyes are twinkling, too. You have a true sense of humor,—you, who could see the funny side even when you were a captive on the *Alabama!* I told some fellows here the other day about your experiences in '63 on board the Confederate cruiser, but I also said that they ought to hear *you* tell the story to realize what it means!

Oh, say, Aunt Mary, why not come up here with the crowd from Hilton? I'm just counting the days until Mrs. Bennett and the twins and Nan get off the up-boat

and bring us a glimpse of home. I guess Lorimer is equally anxious, but as he's a first-class man, I do not see him often nor hear him express his longings.

Time's up for to-day, Aunt Mary. Dress Parade is almost due. That's a sight you ought to see. There's no way out of it: you'll have to come up here!

Regards to all old friends with whom you may choose to share this *brief* answer to your questions.

Always sincerely yours,

FRED WINTER.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SIGHT OF WEST POINT.

In the sunlight of a perfect July morning the Hudson River gleamed blue and silver between greenly wooded shores. Like a huge white bird, perfectly poised, a great steamer glided swiftly up the current. Soft fluffy clouds floated above the west bank of the stream, contrasting sharply with outcropping precipices of bare rock that boldly declared themselves a part of the unrivalled Palisades.

Now and then as the river curved slightly and the sun crept around behind the shoulders of the peaks, parallel shadows fell across the dazzling glare of the slopes and dimmed their clear-cut reflections in the quiet waters.

Sing Sing prison and its sinister suggestion was the only disturbing element in the peaceful and harmonious setting of the scene. Passing boats, clouds, pillars of smoke, tugs with long burdens of lumber, houseboats with the family cooking and washing in evidence, pleasure craft and boat houses in small protected inlets, all these things blended to make a picture serene and restful to the eye tired of the summer sun hot on inland hills.

And to the little group of friends clustered

in the bow of the big steamer on that July morning the Hudson River presented a most lovely and charming aspect.

"Oh, it is good to be here," sighed Peggy Bennett happily, turning her face to the fresh breeze and flinging out her arms in a little gesture of joy.

"Isn't it ripping!" echoed Nan Cummings, once more Peggy's traveling companion.

"It is worth even the rush of getting away," breathed Mrs. Bennett, yielding to a sudden impulse and removing her hat to let the wind ruffle her hair as it would above her tired eyes.

Paul said nothing. With his cousin, Richard Hunter, he was perched on the foremost bit of railing available. He was lost not only in the beauty but in the romantic interest, the historic setting of this majestic river. Its power, its strength impressed him, and he saw in imagination the thousands of ships that it had borne safely on its sometimes placid, sometimes heaving bosom.

He pictured the river as having personality, in taking pride in its potency and in counting over the long lists of sailing vessels and steamships and motor boats that men had intrusted to it from the days of Robert Fulton—and before.

His dreams were suddenly shattered by a loud, hearty voice that hailed his cousin:

"Dick Hunter, as I'm alive! Well, well, you're a sight for sore eyes! But, man, what are you doing here? Where is *Mary Powell* taking you?"

Dick whirled around as the speaker slapped him sharply on the shoulder.

"Why, it's—no—yes, it's Jake Cunningham!"

"That's just who it is," agreed the newcomer, his lips parted in a wide grin that displayed two rows of even white teeth.

"I'd know you now—in a minute," exclaimed Richard Hunter, laughing. "That grin! Oh, Toothpick!"

Both men burst into a roar as the absurdity of that old nickname dawned upon them, for Captain Jacob Cunningham—whatever he may have been ten years before—was now stout to the point of obesity.

"Last I heard of you, you were in the Philippines," Dick said, after introducing Captain Cunningham to Mrs. Bennett and the others and explaining that he was an old prep-school friend.

"Yes, I'm just back from there. Uncle Sammy has given me a few days to play before I report for duty at Fort Hamilton, and I had a hankering desire to see the old place where I toed the mark pretty rigidly for four years."

"He's a West Pointer, you understand, Aunt Evelyn," said Dick to Mrs. Bennett. "He's served in the West, on the Mexican border, and in the Philippines since he graduated. I've kept track of you, Jake," Richard added, to his old friend, "and I'm mighty proud of your record."

Captain Cunningham acknowledged the compliment merely by another of his wide, characteristic grins and then turned to Peggy, whose

eyes were nearly popping out of her head at this unexpected turn of affairs.

"Are you interested in West Point, Miss Bennett?" asked the military man courteously.

"Oh, *yes,*" answered Peggy breathlessly. "We are going there to-day. Two of the boys from home are cadets. I think it's a wonderful place."

"Most girls do," smiled the man. "Every generation catches the fever, and it breaks out in bell-button hat pins and the like."

Peggy blushed consciously but Nan promptly pulled her cadet hat pin from her Panama and looked up saucily at the well-browned soldier.

"We caught the fever first and then there was an epidemic in Hilton Academy," she said. "Burton Lorimer—this is his last year at West Point—supplied our wants as far as he could, and then we divided the spoils with the unfortunates who had been too bashful to ask for themselves. Peggy and I had enough army buttons of various sizes to trim our winter coats and make a set of studs for our shirtwaists besides."

Nan spoke lightly as usual but with that black-eyed witchery—not lessened by a year in college—that made a listener wish that he had something as attractive as army buttons to offer her. Richard, hearing her, suddenly bethought himself of some jeweled scarf pins—gifts of well-meaning friends—that would make her dainty offerings some day!

But to Peggy's mind Nan was only wasting the first moments of a wonderful opportunity.

Why, Fate had delivered into their hands the very chance Peggy had craved, for her mind was as full of bristling question marks as a porcupine's back of quills.

"Won't you tell us, Captain Cunningham, what we must be sure to see in the few hours we have for our visit? We should feel terribly disappointed to miss the very best things."

"Your friends have doubtless planned to fill your time," nodded the Captain reminiscently. "Let me see. The cadets will be in camp now and the summer schedule in effect. H'm. . . . H'm. . . . Oh, I beg your pardon, I was back in my own yearling camp for a moment."

"Oh, tell us about it. Please do," begged Nan, clasping her hands and gazing rapturously at the bronzed hero—as she immediately rated him.

"Yes, *please* do," begged Peggy, drawing her chair nearer to that on which the Captain had seated himself.

"Well, let's see," he replied, stroking his smooth face thoughtfully. Then his wide grin flashed into view. "Say, Dick, did you ever hear how near I came to getting out of the Army for good and all during my yearling camp?"

"No, but I remember that you were always a good story-teller,—both kinds," Dick remarked ambiguously. "Fire ahead!"

"I don't know about that, but here's the yarn anyway: It had been a wearisome summer, to us yearlings at least. We had been going on guard every other day, because for disciplinary reasons the number of sentinels on duty had

been increased from nineteen to thirty-three men. Every case of insubordination had been followed by an increase in the guard and the spirit of mutiny was certainly abroad in that summer camp. Why, night after night cannon in the artillery park were fired off, and yet no one knew how the charge of powder was obtained nor who the culprits were. The long roll would be sounded, we'd all turn out, and on one occasion we were allowed to stand in ranks from three A. M. till reveille at five-thirty, cooling our heels."

"'Them was the happy days,'" commented Dick, gazing at the irregular outline of Anthony's Nose, one of the riverside peaks.

"If they were, we had to search for the happiness. Well, we got tired and more tired, for there were always drills, drills, and more drills and the weather was hot. About this time I got into trouble. Drills and extra sentinel duty had worn me out so that I could fall asleep anywhere at any time. About the middle of August we went on a practice march, and when we returned to camp I was detailed for guard and was posted about nine-fifty P. M. I walked my post until about eleven. Then I began to feel so tired and footsore, I went to the lower end of my post where I had seen a chair and sat down and watched for perhaps twenty minutes."

"Whe-w!" whistled Dick, anticipating what was coming.

"Yes, my friend, I knew no more until the officer of the day stood before me inquiring my

name. Ten minutes later I was relieved from guard and placed in the guard tent."

"That means he was jailed," explained Dick, thinking that Mrs. Bennett and the girls might not understand. But they had not read letters from Doc Lorimer and Fred Winter without learning a good many words from the cadet vocabulary, and they were following the story as intelligently as Dick himself.

"And then what happened?" questioned Mrs. Bennett.

"Just one thing could happen to a man in my condition," laughed Captain Cunningham. "I immediately made down my bed and went to sleep. Say, but didn't I just enjoy a good sleep for the rest of the night! At noon I was released from the guard tent and placed in close arrest in my tent. A couple of days later I was notified that I would be tried by court martial on the following morning. Meanwhile, I looked up the paragraph in 'Articles of War' that I had violated and found that a sentinel asleep on post shall suffer death or such other punishment as the court may direct. I was a trifle scared at the outlook but as I was undoubtedly in for it, I determined to look upon Jake Cunningham merely as some other cadet in whom I was interested and to watch his trial."

"Easy thing to do," commented Dick, "with an axe hanging over your head, so to speak."

"Oh, but do tell us about the trial," begged Peggy.

"It's rather a long story, but perhaps it may

interest you," replied the Captain, looking at Mrs. Bennett inquiringly.

"Please don't stop now," she responded quickly. "We're immensely interested. I, for one, certainly had no idea that cadets were subjected to any such rigid discipline. Did they actually try you by court martial?"

"Let me tell you," he answered, speaking rapidly and beginning to use his hands to explain further the meaning of his words. "Imagine that we are looking into a large, severely plain room, suggestive of Academic work. It is eleven o'clock on a hot August day. Nevertheless, the thirteen men comprising the court, with the exception of the Judge Advocate and the prisoner's counsel, are in full military dress. The President calls the court to order and the unfortunate prisoner, myself, enters."

"Br-r-r-r-r!" shuddered the incorrigible Richard. "Br-r-r-r-r!"

"Yes, that's the way I felt but I had no time to indulge my feelings. To return to the court room: The Judge Advocate names the members of the court (officers who were seated in order of rank), and asks the prisoner if he objects to any of them. He does not. Imagine him doing so! The Judge Advocate reads the order calling the meeting of the court and the charge. Then he turns to the prisoner: 'Do you plead guilty or not guilty to the charge?' 'Guilty to the charge, sir.' 'The prisoner pleads guilty to the charge, the prosecution rests.'"

Captain Cunningham paused dramatically. He was fully enjoying the relation of a long-

cherished incident to this new circle of absorbed listeners. He was even tempted to embroider his story a little, but decided that the facts were themselves stronger than anything his fancy could add.

"The prisoner's counsel next presents testimony regarding mitigating circumstances and two officers witness to the fact that the prisoner was on the practice march and has a previous good record. The prisoner then takes the stand in his own behalf."

"Br-r-r-r-r!" Richard interrupts again.

"Just so," agreed the Captain, grinning. "The oath is administered, the cadet forces himself into a state of calmness and closely watches the faces of the members of the court. From their serious aspect they might be contemplating the extreme penalty! However, the prisoner comforts himself by thinking, 'I'm not dead yet,' and finds a ray of hope in his counsel's plea for clemency that follows. Then the President clears the court for deliberation. When it is again called to order, he asks if there is any record of conviction in a like case. There is none. The prisoner is sent back to camp while the court makes up the sentence."

Captain Cunningham stopped and drew a long breath. For the moment he was again facing that hour of suspense. No one of his listeners spoke or moved as they waited with him for the verdict of the court. Paul, who had been idly sketching in the actors in the strange scene, held his pencil poised above his sketch book and looked up interestedly.

"Well?" questioned Dick at last.

"Well, I can give you the sentence verbatim, and when I've finished you won't wonder that I learned it by heart as time passed. *Le voila!* The sentence of the court is: *First,* that Jacob Jewett Cunningham be confined to the guard tents during the remainder of the encampment. *Second,* that he walk punishment tours daily, Sundays excepted, between the hours of two and five P. M. *Third,* that he be confined to barracks, area of barracks, and gymnasium until January first next. *Fourth,* that he walk punishment tours every Wednesday from ten minutes after four till ten minutes before parade, (one and one-half hours,) and every Saturday from ten minutes after inspection till ten minutes before parade, (nearly three and a half hours,) during this period."

"Heavens!" ejaculated Richard as his friend stopped.

"Wasn't that simply *killing!*" exclaimed Nan, horrified.

"You poor fellow!" said Mrs. Bennett sympathetically. "How did you ever live through it?"

Peggy giggled at that, glancing with sudden mischief at the broad-shouldered, stout figure that looked able to endure almost any physical test.

Captain Cunningham caught her look and laughed understandingly. "Oh, it agreed with me," he answered lightly. "At first I felt a bit sorry for *le pauvre diable* but he soon got used to the tours. He walked over three hundred and

fifty miles, all told, before the time of his sentence expired."

"How did you *feel* walking those 'punishment tours'; what did you think about all those hours of walking?" asked Paul curiously.

Jake Cunningham laughed shortly. "Well, I can tell you about one tour that stands out vividly in my recollection because of the events preceding it," he said.

"Do tell us," exclaimed Paul and Peggy simultaneously.

"Well, here goes: The battalion was ordered to Peekskill on a practice march the latter part of August, pitched camp and stayed over night there. We went down in heavy marching order, that is, with forty-pound packs—it's a dozen miles or so—and had our camp up by eleven A. M. At twelve, dinner was served in rough-and-ready fashion and then the cadets were free until five o'clock, when a sham battle was fought, and guard mounted immediately after. Supper over, we strolled about, dreamed of furlough, and enjoyed ourselves generally until tattoo at nine. Then we gathered in camp and sang the old songs till taps at nine-thirty."

"Ah, *'them* were the happy days,'" quoted Peggy, her eyes kindling with appreciation of the picture his words brought to her mind.

"Yes, that part was all right," agreed the Captain. "The next wasn't quite so agreeable. We crawled into the little shelter tents, six feet long and two and a half high in the middle, two men to a tent, and composed ourselves for slumber with only a woollen blanket and a poncho be-

tween us and the hard, hard ground! But the night seemed mighty short!" He stopped and sighed regretfully, while the rest laughed unsympathetically.

"Yes, reveille sounded at four-thirty, we had breakfast at five, and struck camp at five-thirty. The plebs loaded the wagons and we marched for West Point at six. About half way there we had another skirmish with a couple of companies which were defending a defile, and then we kept to the road till we reached Garrisons, where we halted for refreshments served to the battalion through the kindness of a cadet's mother. We got back to camp about eleven-forty-five A. M. and we prisoners were allowed an hour for rest and a bath. Then we had to report to the officer of the guard and go back to the guard tent.

"Now to answer your question," continued the Captain, turning to Paul. "If you will just keep in mind the marching and skirmishing we'd done inside of twenty-four hours, you'll see why I hoped to dead beat my tour that afternoon. But, no, I had my three hours to walk just the same. The first was bad, the second was—well—*torture,* but the third hour was the easiest of all, for my legs and feet by that time were absolutely without feeling and the process of walking was simply automatic. Talk about the *soirée* of the old hazing days when I was a pleb!—I'd rather go to *two* any time than ever walk that tour again!"

A startlingly loud whistle unexpectedly emphasized this remark and Captain Cunningham

looked up to say, "However, in these days such extreme punishments are not allowed,—and here we are, friends! The skipper up above is telling that impudent little ferry from Garrison to get out of our way. The ferry's skipper probably wants to make his landing before we do, for he brings over the passengers who have come up from New York by train. They are always delighted to get in ahead, just so they can say to their friends from the steamer: 'I told you so! I said I'd be there to meet you!' "

Nan, with Richard following in her wake, hurried to the rail to watch the landing, but Peggy and her mother lingered beside the Captain, and Paul covertly finished a sketch of his rugged figure and stalwart bearing.

Mrs. Bennett looked up with an expression of curious interest in her steady blue-gray eyes. "Will you tell me, Captain Cunningham, how all this strikes you after ten years? This rigorous discipline, these unending drills, the training in habits of order—do they retain a hold on you as time passes? What *is* their lasting influence?"

The former West Point cadet returned her frank gaze as frankly. "The effect, my dear madam, is doubtless nine-tenths to the good. No better physical and mental training is given anywhere. There's always some question about the ultimate moral influence of extreme restraint. The tendency is always toward reaction—the man who's *had* to put his shining shoes in regulation order three hundred and sixty-five days a year for four years is apt to find a mad pleas-

ure in kicking his dusty, muddy boots around the floor when released from daily inspection. Whether in other more important things there is a similar reaction, I won't presume to say. You know there is sometimes a case that proves the old adage about 'minister's sons and deacon's daughters,' although there are numerous exceptions. The question resolves itself, after all, to the individual man. If he is the man he ought to be, he is strong enough to bend both ways and then swing back to the upright."

There was no time for the question that had been standing unspoken in Peggy's eyes during this reply, for the company began to move slowly toward the gangways. But in Mrs. Bennett's mind was established a new respect for the manhood that *might* be the result of West Point training, and her interest in the cadets whom they had come to visit quickened at the thought.

What had a year done for Fred Winter, the youth who had come to Hilton from a western ranch, silent, aloof, self-centred, and sensitive, and who had remained almost friendless, therefore, until he had won a walking race, written a prize essay, and saved her Peggy from danger of drowning? Had his grit, ambition, and persistence found outlet and encouragement here? Had he enough good sense to see the future gain through the haze—and perhaps hazing—of the pleb apprenticeship?

Burton Lorimer, whom she had known longer, she had seen when he was at home on furlough the year before. She had been greatly pleased at his modesty and courtesy, his physical and

mental development, and his unspoiled love for his old home and friends. As a first-year cadet, would he retain the same winning qualities that had made him always popular both among the students and the older people of Hilton? In the light of Captain Cunningham's remarks, Mrs. Bennett felt that Lorimer would stand the severest tests. Still, there was this question of extreme, unnatural restraint. It might spoil the sweetest nature. What had it done to his?

CHAPTER IX.

DIFFERENCES.

The wide-reaching plain at West Point that stretched green and level from the Library and great gray barracks to Trophy Point and the dominating Battle Monument had never looked fairer than on that July day when the quintette of visitors from Massachusetts first looked out upon it. For three years Mrs. Bennett, the twins, Nan, and Richard had kept more or less closely in touch with the life and character of West Point through Burton Lorimer's letters and occasional photographs, but no description nor camera had done full justice to the beauty of the scene that lay before them now.

Paul and the girls had climbed the hill from the steamer's landing slowly, eager to gain first impressions through their own eyes, unbiassed by guide or friend, and to see if the great quadrangle were really all that they had pictured it.

Mrs. Bennett and Dick had taken a carriage directly to the hotel, where they had registered and claimed the rooms reserved for their party. As they hurried out again to meet the others at the Parade Ground, they were scarcely less eager than the twins and Nan to inspect the place and to see the two cadets from Hilton.

Captain Cunningham had told them that from the presence of a United States cruiser at anchor in the river, he suspected the first-class naval cadets from Annapolis might be in evidence; that it was usual for them to visit West Point on their summer cruise about this time and, if so, special drills, receptions and hops would be given in their honor.

"You've chosen a rare day to see the Military Academy if the Middies are here," the Captain had said at leaving them to go to the officers' quarters, where he had friends. "The cadets will be on their mettle and there'll be some snappy exhibitions. To make an impression on the naval cadets, they'd outshine 'de glitterin' sun'!"

"The Captain was right about visitors from Annapolis," nodded Richard as he and his aunt came in sight of the long regular lines of white-trousered cadets drawn up in front of the summer camp. "Evidently the whole battalion is out for an inspection or drill, and yet there are a good many cadets among the observers, too. My 'cit's' eyes wouldn't distinguish the difference at this distance, however. I don't know either uniform very accurately."

"There! They are beginning to march!" exclaimed Mrs. Bennett as eagerly as a young girl. "Let's get as near as we can. Oh, where are the children?"

"They will find us, don't worry," responded Dick good-naturedly. "Here, I'll secure a seat for you if I can."

Hardly had he discovered a vacant chair and

established her in it before Paul and Peggy and Nan joined them, throwing themselves down breathlessly at Mrs. Bennett's feet.

"Oh, we couldn't get by the Riding Academy without trying to peek in, and we finally had a glimpse of some of the most *stunning* horses," panted Nan.

"Yes, and when we caught sight of the cadets parading, we just tore across the plain for fear we'd miss something," added Peggy in a hasty whisper.

Paul put his faithful little kodak on the ground within reach of Peggy's hand and stood up straight and tall beside Richard. Like most of the other observers he was "bracing," unconsciously influenced by the splendidly erect bearing of the highly trained cadets.

"The worst slouch among them stands better than I do," he confessed to himself, failing, however, to discover a single member of the battalion whom he could justly term a "slouch."

The long lines of cadets—two platoons to each of the six companies—moved as one man under the sharp, decisive commands of their officers. The sun gleamed across the polished surfaces of their rifles as they swung forward in perfect unison; the feet of six hundred men rose and fell with absolute precision. Platoons changed to columns of fours, then by a double-time oblique movement of the fours, the battalion again formed into columns of platoons.

Inspiring music sounded from the dazzling instruments of the band, music which set the bystanders' feet into motion and seemed to pos-

sess power enough to awaken rhythm in the soul —or soles—of any cadet.

The marching manœuvers ceased in a sudden silence. A sharp order rang out. It was echoed here and there in brief commanding tones. The band burst forth again into new time and tune and the entire battalion fell into a springing, running step. Not one man faltered as the lines swept down the full length of the parade ground and back again to their former location, maintaining throughout the magnificent alignment and rhythmic, swinging action for which the corps is famous.

"How can they *stand* it?" asked Nan, her own endurance of the long, hard drill reaching its limit. "I've been expecting every minute that somebody would simply *drop*."

"Training," responded Dick laconically, his eyes fixed in admiring respect upon the unwavering lines before him.

"There, that's over." Nan looked up again, relieved, as the music stopped and the cadets stood "at ease." Then for the first time they showed the effect of their strenuous exertions in the hot sun. They relaxed, took off their close-fitting hats and wiped their perspiring brows.

"They are human, after all," breathed Peggy, shaking her head slowly. "I almost thought they were machines."

"How impossible to *imagine* perfection of movement like that," said her mother, still thinking of the remarkable control of the cadets. "One must see it to believe it."

"Let me tell you what I overheard just before

this formation began," smiled Dick, lowering his voice. "The cadets were all lined up, but a nice old lady who stood near me was too near-sighted to know it. 'When are the cadets coming out?' she asked her companion. He evidently did not reply, for a few minutes later she said patiently: 'Isn't that a pretty fence in the middle of the plain? John, do you know what it is for?' "

Just then one unit of the perfectly-working fence-like whole approached the visitors, saluted stiffly, and then, at their look of uncertainty, uncovered and laughed.

"Hello, everybody!" It was Doc Lorimer's voice and his old laugh, but, as Nan expressed it later, "it was such a wrench to get away from the collection of unknown and recognize in an individual cadet an old friend, that they almost refused to know him at all."

"How do you do, Mrs. Bennett?" Doc added immediately, bowing with a correctness of manner that quite awed the girls.

Dick, meanwhile, was taking in the details of the cadet's uniform and Paul was trying to guess the rank indicated by the "three bars of single lace on each arm above the elbow, points up."

After greetings had been exchanged among them all, Mrs. Bennett asked for Fred Winter, surprised that he, too, had not come to meet them.

"Oh, he has a punishment tour to walk off this afternoon," answered Lorimer lightly. "Then he's confined to the guard tent till evening. He asked me to explain his absence to you."

"Why, what has he done?" asked Nan, shocked at the explanation.

"Really, I don't know,—caught firing the reveille gun at midnight, I guess. He has a lot of company; doing tours, you know."

"Tough that he had to stand punishment to-day, though," said Paul sympathetically.

"Oh, well, it's the life," replied Lorimer; and suddenly they were all reminded that a first-class man who had been through it could hardly be expected to consider seriously the troubles of a mere yearling, and one scarcely out of plebdom at that.

"This is a great day here," Lorimer remarked after a moment. "Perhaps you've noticed the naval cadets strolling around. They're on their summer cruise, and have stopped off to pay us a visit. To-night we are giving an out-door hop and camp illumination in their honor. It will be a gay time, and I'm mighty glad you're here to see it."

"There, now wasn't I right?" demanded Nan characteristically, turning to Peggy. "Didn't I say we'd better take at least one pretty dress for evening? I felt in my bones we should want it. Nobody cares to look a fright at a place like this," and she glanced up sidewise at the tall cadet.

"You needn't be afraid to look your prettiest, Nan," laughed Lorimer understandingly. "The most wonderful thing about our hops is the pretty girls that come to them."

Mrs. Bennett smiled. Lorimer was entirely at his ease and enjoying Nan's coquetting as a

young man may who counts the hours he may spend in girls' society.

But Peggy was getting impatient. She could hear Nan's opinions about clothes—a subject of unfailing fascination to Nan—at any time, but she might never stand again where there were so many wonderfully interesting things just waiting to be seen. So Peggy became diplomatic.

"Oh, Doc," she cried, opening wide her own very effective blue eyes and stepping close to him, "this is just about the loveliest place on earth, isn't it? Won't you show us what you like best here—where you live and recite and play and—write poetry?"

Peggy spoke the last words softly so that no one but Lorimer heard her, and he flashed back a look that said half-exultantly, "You remember!"

For it had so happened, 'way back in Hilton Academy days, that Burton Lorimer had written some of the class odes and school songs, and Peggy, loving to write herself, hazarded a guess that West Point training had not hammered all the poetry out of one emotional cadet.

Nodding an answer to Peggy's question, Lorimer turned and fitted his step to hers, saying to the rest: "Shall we put in the time before parade in a little exploration tour? You will see camp to-night, and we'll give you a glimpse of 'war' to-morrow in our exhibition drills, but you ought to know something of the Reservation, first."

So, leading the way, Doc and Peggy strolled toward the Library, talking busily. Nan watched

the spic-and-span uniform advance before her, noted the attentive bend of Doc's head toward Peggy's and felt that Richard Hunter, walking beside her, himself content that he was there, looked very, very commonplace in ordinary traveling tweeds! Surely, in all this enchanted spot that boasted hundreds of handsome cadets at that very moment, there should be one—even a despised pleb—for her.

Mrs. Bennett, bringing up the rear with Paul, who never allowed his mother to feel neglected and was even now emulating the cadets themselves in his polite attentions to her, read something of Nan's feelings in her dejected attitude, although at the same time she smiled at Peggy's unusual astuteness in circumventing Nan. However, she made no effort to change the situation, feeling in truth a little glad that for once Peggy was not sacrificing her own pleasure on the altar of her devotion to Nan.

Peggy might deceive others into thinking that Nan's foolish quarrelsomeness of the year before had made no difference in their friendship, but Mrs. Bennett read Peggy's varying expressions of face and tone as easily as Nan herself translated French, and she *knew* Peggy's own heart and shaken faith. While she sighed, she was glad, for Peggy's devotion to Nan had always been "too utterly too, too," as Paul had said scornfully, and it was quite time for her interests to broaden.

At the impressive and attractive granite Library, Lorimer called out facetiously: "Squad, halt! The Officer of the Day issues orders to

inspect books. Squad, 'tention! Forward, march!"

Nan had the good grace to respond, "Aye, aye, sir," and then to add, turning a happier face to Richard: "What is it we should say, Mr. Hunter? Army men don't answer that way, do they?"

"They're not expected to answer at all, Nan," said Paul, overhearing her. "They simply obey."

" 'Theirs not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why,' " added Dick in Nan's ear as they passed a group of cadets coming out of the Library.

The big, quiet rooms with their trophies and portraits and walls lined with books fascinated Peggy as all libraries did, but when Richard snapped his watch case suggestively and remarked to Lorimer, "Ah,—Lieutenant, what time did you say Dress Parade occurs?" even she realized they must hasten if they were to see half the places of interest on the Post.

As they approached the tall, shining column of Battle Monument—erected in memory of two thousand or more officers and private soldiers of the Regular Army who gave their lives to their country in the Civil War,—Mrs. Bennett caught a glimpse of the view just beyond.

"Oh, squad, halt!" she exclaimed beseechingly, remembering Lorimer's phrase. "Oh, wait—stop right here! What a wonderful, what an exquisite scene!"

Lorimer's chest swelled with pride. It was the supreme moment toward which every cadet looks when he begins to escort a stranger about

the beautiful grounds of West Point, for it held the most famous view of the incomparable Hudson.

Before them lay the blue, glimmering river, its even course interrupted by low-lying hills on either side that stretched out like great dogs thrusting their long noses thirstily into the water. Far and away on distant banks framed by less distant slopes lay white spots and red splashes and gray smoke clouds, the signs that spelled Newburgh to the initiated. On the nearer waters sailboats and launches, row boats and occasional canoes, danced lightly, fitting into the lovely picture as though selected and placed at the direction of an artist.

Silently the little group dropped down on the broad steps at the foot of the Monument and drank in the beauty of the scene. For the moment, Nature had outstripped the Nation in commanding their interest, and uniforms and military manœuvers were relegated to second place.

Not for long, however, for immediately beneath them, sweeping the waters of the Hudson, was the siege battery, its alternating guns and piles of cannon balls distinct against the green embankment that hid them from the river beyond. And then Lorimer called their attention to level green plains partly visible on the left bank, where he said polo practice was going on.

"Do you play?" inquired Peggy.

"Just as often as I can," was the reply. "Riding has always been one of my greatest pleasures here,—you know, I am going into the cav-

alry,—and since I learned to play polo I like nothing better. They say 'polo is the sport of kings,' so I must make the most of my time while here, for I have not the money to spend on ponies that a king or Uncle Sammy has!"

"I noticed some fine specimens being led in that direction while we were walking down here," remarked Paul, his eyes brightening. "They were certainly dandies. Say, Peggy, let's play polo when we get rich."

"All right—when we do," she replied, laughing at him frankly. "Shall I order a suitable outfit at once,—*and charge it to you?*"

They all laughed at that, because even Lorimer, who had been their companion to Washington, knew how frequently Paul put his hand into an empty pocket, always surprised to find it empty.

"Now for our favorite walk, short or long according to one's humor,—or sense of humor," the cadet ended, laughing at some recollection of his own.

He led them down the steps and along the roadway to a spot near Gee's Point, where they stopped again to admire the view that they had already seen from the Monument. And there Lorimer showed them where the old battery was located that defended the chain stretched across the river in Revolutionary Days.

"And this is the Chain-Battery walk," he added as they entered upon a well-trodden path that followed the windings of the river many, many feet above it. "Won't you and Paul lead the way, Mrs. Bennett?" he asked, stepping back

to allow them to pass. "After you, my dear friends," he added to Richard and Nan. Then as they moved forward obediently while he detained Peggy, he concluded whimsically: "Now all is arranged to my satisfaction! Peggy and I will bring up the rear, for I wish to explain and moreover to demonstrate why this leafy bower, this winding way, this perilous path is popularly termed 'Flirtation Walk'!"

Peggy paused confusedly but then decided to join the laughter that burst from the rest as they realized how neatly Lorimer had executed the little manœuver. Dick's eyes twinkled and he grasped Nan's arm without a second's hesitation. Now he dared to let his true feelings show, for she would interpret them as being assumed for the occasion.

Paul looked a little blank at the sudden turn of affairs but said promptly: "Come on, Mother, you and I would scorn to linger where no chaperone is wanted. We'll beat them to the other end. Bet you Doc will be late for Dress Parade."

"Not I," replied the young cadet. "I know which side of my slice of bread has jam on it!"

"What is your rank, Doc, really?" asked Nan, turning back for a moment. "We're not wise enough to read the meaning of the chevron on your sleeve."

"Third ranking lieutenant in the bunch, an' it please you, ma'am," Lorimer replied, not trying to conceal the justifiable pride that he felt.

"Oh, that's splendid!" cried Peggy, clasping her hands in sincere gladness at his success.

"You have your reward for all you've gone through, haven't you?"

"That's one way to look at it,—but let's look at this nifty little glimpse of the river between the trees instead."

By and by a squeal from Nan, who had passed out of sight with Richard beyond one of the many curves of the path, brought them hurrying forward to learn its cause.

"What's up?" called the cadet.

Nan was pouting and Richard himself was looking a little sheepish.

"Well, it is awfully narrow along here and Mr. Hunter *accidentally* nearly pushed me over the precipice," Nan explained, still pouting. Nan knew that pouts were becoming.

Lorimer laughed, and Dick smiled in spite of his chagrin at her telling.

"Oh, that's an old trick. It's tried every day at about this place. Don't you see why? We all aspire to be HEROES in the eyes of our loidy friends. *Look out, Peggy!* Heavings, child, you had me scared."

Peggy jumped as Doc had intended that she should and emitted a squeal almost equal to Nan's. Then she stood very, very still and shook her golden head very, very slowly at the grinning youth.

"Do forgive me," he begged, not at all contritely.

"No," she answered, her face sober but her eyes dancing in spite of herself. "No, you have evidently been forgiven already too many times. But really," she added seriously, "this walk *is*

extremely narrow. I should think they would have life preservers here."

"Why, they do," he answered promptly. "I am one. Is your life in danger?"

At that, Richard threw back his head and laughed the laugh that was characteristic of him alone. It shook the hill behind him and echoed across the river and brought two or three other strolling couples hastily into view.

"Nan, he's able to defend himself, with or without his sword. Let's move on;" and again Richard and Nan wandered along the path and out of sight.

"Doc, do you ever get a chance to write here —I mean odes, verses, poetry, you know?" asked Peggy, stammering a little but determined to inquire.

The young lieutenant looked up and down the path carefully. "I don't know that I would care to have it known, Peggy, but I'm sometimes guilty. Take a night when I can stroll down to Trophy Point alone, watch the moonbeams steal across the water, or the lights twinkle away off in the darkness at Newburgh, and, well, once in a while I find myself thinking in rhyme."

"I knew you did," exclaimed Peggy triumphantly, "but I wanted to hear you say so. Won't you let me see some of your 'thinking in rhyme'?"

"Maybe—some time." That was all Lorimer had time to say, for the next turn of the path brought them around a high, abrupt, rocky shoulder to a wonderfully luxuriant spot where

near a little marble pool stood the other members of their own party.

"This is Kosciusko's Garden," explained the cadet as Peggy stopped in surprise. "And this is the end of Flirtation, also," he added, looking into Mrs. Bennett's searching eyes with an honest, straightforward glance.

She smiled at him brightly and happily, he thought, and suddenly he realized that she had been testing and trusting him. Then he looked at Peggy, bending down to read the inscription on the marble basin, and he saw in a flash why it was that he had actually talked *seriously* with a girl on Flirtation Walk. She was different,—but he liked the difference.

He glanced again at Mrs. Bennett and found that she was still watching him. He crossed to her side and said simply, "Why aren't more girls like Peggy?"

She smiled and shook her head thoughtfully; but her question about how Lorimer's character would stand the extreme conditions at the Point was answered to her own satisfaction. For the moment, he had dropped his infectious gaiety and his soldierly pose alike and had shown her that he was still the same simple, straightforward, directly truthful youth whom she had always known and loved.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAMP ILLUMINATION.

Dress Parade had come and gone and left an indelible picture in the minds of at least five eager-eyed spectators. They had been awed and thrilled and moved to quick, stinging tears by the splendor, the perfection and the patriotism of the time-honored sunset ceremony. When the garrison flag was slowly lowered to the martial strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner," the feeling had been almost too intense to be borne. West Point cadets, naval cadets and visitors had watched the descent of the fluttering colors, united by one great impulse that made all lesser differences insignificant; for here love of country implied also pride in her ideals and defence of her homes. For the time, also, no profession nor art nor trade had life or color beside this brilliant calling of the soldier. Tiresome drills, endless "boning," restrictions and punishments, all were forgotten, for every heart caught anew a coal from off the altar fire of patriotism.

Still aglow from that inspiration, the companies of cadets and visitors met and mingled in the lesser glow of camp illumination that evening. Escorted by Lieutenant Lorimer and Private Winter, Nan Cummings and Peggy Ben-

nett were among the gayest and happiest of the many guests who paraded the company streets of the camp under the guidance of the local cadets. Fred Winter was quite beside himself with a joy that made him radiant, and he and Nan laughed and teased and danced and flirted with an irresistible heartiness.

Lorimer's tentmate, who had roomed with him ever since they both entered the Academy, was "doing his prettiest," according to Lorimer, to be polite to Mrs. Bennett.

"He's a handsome guy and will jolly your mother into thinking she's only sweet sixteen and going to a party with her first beau," said Doc to Peggy, laughing as he caught sight of his chum's gallant devotion to Mrs. Bennett. "Not that she looks many days older than you girls, but McLoughlin is Irish, you know, and his grandfather, maybe, kissed the Blarney Stone and handed down the soft kiddin' way he had with him to Jim. Jim can win everything from a bashful maiden to an unbroken bronco, but, alas, he can't make an impression on the 'Com' when it's a question of discipline. He's confined to the guard tent just now for a couple of weeks and there's no getting around it or finding the soft side of the officer of the guard."

"What has he done?" asked Peggy, beginning to think that it must be pretty hard to walk the straight and narrow way and avoid both unpopularity and punishment.

"Oh, he was one of a number of cadets who put some plebs up to firing off the reveille gun at

midnight a week or two ago. He was out supervising their unscheduled drill and unfortunately fell in the darkness on his way back to our tent. Consequently he fell also into the hands of the sentinel, who had to report him,—and that was the end of 'my wife.' "

"But Mr. McLoughlin is here to-night," said Peggy questioningly.

"Yes, all the prisoners are released until twelve P. M. for the illumination,—but at midnight back they go to durance vile. Would you like to see how I 'decorated' our tent in sympathy with my departed 'wife'?"

Peggy nodded an eager assent and Lorimer drew her out of the path of promenaders toward another section of the tent village. Then he stopped suddenly.

"Hold on! There are two femmes I know,—queens from Vassar College. We'll surround them and hand them over to Paul and your cousin. I saw them wandering around alone a little while ago."

So Peggy was introduced to the "queens,"—she was adding new words momentarily to her cadet vocabulary,—who proved to be the typical kind of college girls over whom she always sighed in secret because she envied them so. Nobody knew how she had longed to go to college, least of all perhaps Paul, for she had foreseen that Paul's demands on their "education fund" would necessarily be large—yes, and long. So she had fought a little battle with herself and decided with characteristic definiteness to take instead the training for the work she loved and be ready

to help Paul "in case anything happened" before he had acquired his independence.

The Vassar girls, slender, vivacious, well-poised and perfectly sure of themselves, greeted Lieutenant Lorimer effusively and Peggy very kindly and cordially.

"Isn't this a perfectly charming sight!" one of them—Eleanore D'Amour—exclaimed. "And aren't you the favored one to be here on 'Navy Night'?"

"Oh, Mr. Lorimer," cried the other "femme" —Mary Ellen Green by name,—"We're simply dying to meet some of the Middies. Eleanor and I have wagered that they'll claim they have the harder course and all that just as you men do. Two of the other girls argued that they couldn't claim that because everybody knows they're here on a summer cruise—which has been more like a yachting party—receptions, shore leaves, and good times galore——"

"Yes," grumbled Lorimer, "while we were working like slaves at P.M.E (Practical Military Engineering),—digging trenches and building pontoon or spar bridges,—and at infantry and artillery drills."

"But you know it was good for you," nodded Eleanore D'Amour. "You are as brown as berries and as hard as nails."

"While they," broke in Lorimer, "are as fair as lilies and soft as——"

"Snails," put in Peggy, laughing,—and that ended the comparisons.

"Come," beckoned the cadet mysteriously, "I'll introduce you to some men—leading citizens of

New England. One is a famous Bostonian and the other a near-famous artist from me own native town."

It was not long before Doc caught sight of Richard and Paul leaning against one of the big lantern-decked trees and talking with two of the visiting cadets.

"Behold, am I not better than my word?" cried Lorimer, amused at the coincidence. "There are my New Englanders and your Middies. Some good fairy must have learned of your 'dying' condition and hastened to your aid."

Having performed the necessary introductions and greeted in turn the naval cadets, Lorimer once more started to show Peggy the tent decorated appropriately for his "departed wife." After passing many gay white shelters, bright with lanterns and elaborate with borrowed finery, it was startling to see the contrast that Lorimer's tent presented. Peggy gave a gasp of surprise as the cadet drew her to the darkened entrance and she looked in.

A sheet hung on a stretcher made a white background for the gloomy and grewsome interior. Above, below and at each side of the sheet everything was black—a result achieved by the lavish use of ponchos. On the floor in front of the sheet a locker was placed to represent a coffin, and this and the floor were likewise covered by the black rubber blankets. A candle burned dimly at each end of the mimic coffin and above it against the sheet hung a poncho on which was drawn a grinning skull and crossbones. The whole weird spectacle was explained to the pass-

ing observer by the sad legend in distinct lettering: "In Memoriam. My Wife is in the Guard Tent."

Lorimer chuckled with delight at the comments of the curious crowd who peered surprisedly at this single note of discord in the glad harmony of light and color and then passed on to less depressing exhibitions.

Soon he and Peggy followed the moving throngs to the brightly lighted pavilion on the parade, where music and dancing were proving more attractive than Chinese lanterns, red lights and the open hospitality of camp.

"What a dreamland it all is!" Peggy exclaimed, looking back at the tent village, dancing lights, and sheltering trees.

"If we only needn't wake up," returned Burton Lorimer solemnly. "But there is stiff battle practice to-morrow morning, and soon the dread realities of boning in barracks,—civil and military engineering, law, history, astronomy,—and drills, drills, drills. Oh, *forget it!* . . . Say, Peggy, do you feel the swing of that dreamy waltz the band is playing? Tra, la, la, tra, la, la, tra-ah, la, la, tra, la, la——"

Peggy felt it and every one within hearing felt it, and to those who loved to dance the perfect rhythm was a joy. That dancing is not only an art as practiced by the West Point cadet but one of his few social pleasures, Peggy knew. And as she saw the perfection and grace and decorum and withal the bubbling joy of the cadets who tripped the light fantastic with their guests from home and neighboring towns, she shared with

them the happiness of this out-of-door hop in honor of the visiting cadets.

"There's a fire in C Company," Peggy overheard some one say as she and Lorimer were meeting other friends of his at the pavilion.

"Did you hear that?" she asked him. "Isn't your tent in C Company?"

"Oh, yes," he answered carelessly. "Probably somebody's knocked down a Chinese lantern and started a little blaze. You don't want to go back, do you?"

A "femme" in a lovely soft white gown was waiting and Lorimer's feet were twitching for the dance.

"Oh, no," answered Peggy quickly, and turned toward the cadet who was taking her wide silk scarf from Lorimer's arm.

But an hour later when the Hilton party had drifted together, Lorimer proposed that they all visit the tent that was draped in mourning and incidentally look up the location of the fire.

"Have you seen your tent?" called out a passing friend significantly, and Lorimer had a chill of premonition.

His fear was verified when they turned into C Company Street. What had once been a tent of mourning was now a pile of ashes covered by a charred and wet heap of canvas.

Lorimer looked at McLoughlin and McLoughlin looked at him.

Then Lorimer laughed. "Well, ladies and gentlemen, it looks as though our little firm was out about fifty dollars, and it's evidently up to me."

He swooped down upon a bit of glittering gilt

among the ruins and disentangled a dress hat ornament bearing the coat of arms of the Academy.

"Permit me, Mrs. Bennett, to give you a souvenir of Camp Illumination," he said, handing it to her with a sweeping bow; "may it remind you that the spirit of West Point, though submerged for a season, rises Phœnix-like from the ashes!"

And with that, the company dispersed.

The next morning a thrilling entertainment was provided for the visiting Middies and the many guests who had lingered at the hotel overnight. The battalion gave an exhibition drill of attack and defense, which involved the use of infantry, full artillery, cavalry, and a pack train with mountain battery. It was a scene of mad confusion from which orders rang out, guns thundered, and rifles crackled along the line of trenches. Infantry advanced by rushes, then swung into a bayonet charge. Cavalry thundered past in desperate sabre charges. Artillery fire kept up a deafening accompaniment. But in spite of all, the defense could not be overpowered, and finally an orderly retreat was effected.

These manœuvers were executed so methodically and realistically that the lookers-on became tense with excitement and could hardly believe that they were not seeing a bit of actual warfare.

That exhibition over, the visit of the Hilton party drew to its close. Reluctant farewells were exchanged and as the battle cruiser steamed away on its return trip to Annapolis, Mrs. Bennett with

her four traveling companions took the boat up the Hudson for Albany.

Somewhere up among the great gray castellated buildings two cadets from Hilton, Massachusetts, turned soberly to their duties.

In the guard tent with Fred Winter and Jim McLoughlin were six other men, confined for various offenses, and any one of them would have grimly assured you that in the light of recent freedom the life of a cadet prisoner was no sinecure.

The dimensions of the tent where they were confined were ten by twelve feet, its regulation furniture one stool for each prisoner. In this delectable spot all their time not occupied by duty was spent. They were released and sent to camp under charge of a sentinel at every formation, and under no circumstances could they leave the guard tent for any purpose without the attendance of a sentinel.

Concerning the difficulties that arose from these restrictions, Fred Winter wrote Paul shortly after the visit already recorded:

"Our daily life is a fight from morning till night with the officer of the guard for a sentinel. Sometimes there are only four or five yearlings on guard and they have to drag eight prisoners around. If many are on post, then we have to wait till the last moment before the O. G. will give us a pleb. At reveille we fight (verbally) for a sentinel to take us to camp in order to get our bedding in and to wash for breakfast. Sometimes we get fifteen minutes and sometimes nine or ten. After breakfast we fight for a sentinel to drive us in to get ready for drill.

After drill, for one to drive us for bath. The Com. has just given orders that the prisoners should take a bath *only on Sundays.* The way we get around this is to have a good-natured sentinel drive us around to a hydrant and hose and there take a cold bath after dark.

We are not allowed to bring out bedding till tattoo, but we get around that by making plebs bring out the blankets, etc., soon after dark.

" 'The soldier's life is the life for me.'!"

And Lorimer? In the few leisure moments when drills or other duties were not pending, he thought a great deal of the future. What did it hold for him? Routine duty at some post on the eastern coast? Foreign service and hard fighting? Any chance for recognition or promotion? Home life ever or camp life always? Friends like these who had come from Hilton to visit him?

Ah, well, who could tell? Whatever might come, he, too, said,

" 'A soldier's life is the life for me'!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE CANADIAN ROCKIES—ACCORDING TO PEGGY.

Margaret Carruthers Bennett to Corinne and Collette Kendall of Hilton, Massachusetts:

THE CHATEAU, LAKE LOUISE,
ALBERTA, CANADA. July ——, 19——

DEAR C. C.'S,—

Yes, this is truly the first long letter I have sat down to write since we left home,—and you do deserve it. It's a shame the way I've neglected you since my splendid visit at Smith, but a "Thank you" note was actually all I had a chance to send. And what a good time you gave me! I certainly absorbed enough college spirit at your tennis tournament and teas to make up for some of the learning I skipped in so brief a college course!

Then came my also-delightful glimpses of Wellesley and Harvard and the exciting Yale-Harvard boat race at New London—did you know that Skinny Lincoln was coxswain of the Yale Freshman crew?—and finally the year's wind-up at the Training School in Boston and the exhibitions at the Museum. (Perhaps you don't know that Paul won a prize and a scholarship. I felt quite proud even to be sister to a scholarship!)

Of course I should have managed to see you after we returned home had you been in Hilton instead of on the

sand dunes at Annisquam the last of June, although it was practically impossible to do anything in the social line after Aunt Mary's party, we were so busy getting ready to start on this journey. This time we knew just what we wanted to take with us, but even so it was hard to get everything into its place in a brief fortnight.

Mother and I fastened a double row of pockets with elastic tops in the covers of our suitcases to hold small articles like handkerchiefs and veils, and made thin silk bags to contain everything else. It's surprising how much more we can carry with this arrangement, and there's no comparing the comfortable results with the confusion that we enjoyed (?) before. However, that is not what I started to write.

We have been away from home only ten days—but it seems many more already. The vastness of this marvellous country through which we are traveling makes our glorious sail up the Hudson and our visit at West Point look like a splash of cobalt blue in a great mural decoration—that wonderful striking blue that Maxfield Parrish puts into his paintings, you know. I must remember to ask Paul if that *is* cobalt. *Cobalt* blue,—well, never mind. You know what I mean. You can fairly taste it, it's so delicious.

It surely would have to be an unusual color to stand for that wonderful river and the most fascinating, inspiring, picturesque, patriotic experience you can imagine,—for West Point furnished all that and more. Burton Lorimer and his adorable Irish "wife," and Fred Winter as well, gave us a delightful time, to which a stalwart Captain Cunningham and a class of naval cadets added things until our visit radiated into golden halos of joy. It makes me thrill just to recall them.

But, anyhow, after the crash of arms and roar of can-

non came a peaceful lull, during which we finished the Hudson to Albany—another lovely stretch of blue river, green banks and interesting traffic,—flew on to Lake George, sailed serenely over that pretty little sheet of water,—not so little, either,—hopped along by steamer and rail to Lake Champlain, and thence to Montreal. You see, we had determined to take the out-door, all-the-way-by-water route so far as we could,—which meant most of the distance from home to Montreal.

Now we are having a long inland journey. We mean to break it all we can, but with the water-way start and the Great Lakes finish, I am sure we shall not mind a lot of railroading sandwiched in between.

You may remember hearing Paul or me speak of a Mr. Huntington whom we met on our first trip across the continent. He lives in New York and he was recalled from San Francisco last summer just about the time we were, so he, also, missed seeing Yellowstone. Well, he decided to visit the Park this year with us and joined us at Winnipeg, coming directly by the way of Chicago and St. Paul.

It makes it very jolly to have him, for we all like him. Of course Nan didn't know him before, but she seems to like him as well as we do already and gets on with him even better,—just as Nan always does, you know, with men. She seems so adaptable. I wonder how she does it. Sometimes I almost envy her.

But there! I started to tell you that we're just reveling in mountains again,—and this time mountains that would certainly discourage even the brave old "Mountaineer," the touring car, you know, in which we did the White Mountains three summers ago. They are wonderful—these mountains! They reach up to kiss the caressing clouds above them as easily as a tall man lifts

his head to kiss the child he carries on his shoulder. In return the clouds sweep lower and lower and enfold the peaks in a soft, clinging embrace. Then, as you watch, the mountains stand clear again. There is nothing left besides but a fine film, lifting and floating away, scattered by some passing wind, though perhaps, to carry out the "figger," these sentinel mountains may have themselves brushed the clouds away as though they were a veil that blurred the outlook over the ranges and valleys, lakes and rivers at their feet. However that may be, the effect at all hours of day and night, in sunrise or noontide, twilight or moonlight is ever changing and always majestic and beautiful.

The air is so invigorating up here it makes you feel equal to anything. We stopped over at Banff for a day and took a three-mile walk out to Sun Dance Canyon. Even Mother could hardly believe she had walked six miles and more when we returned to the Springs Hotel. What *is* Sun Dance Canyon? Oh, it's a picturesque gorge beneath the site of a famous Indian camping ground,—beautiful, as all this wonderful mountainous country is. The rest had asked me to choose what trip to take that afternoon, and I chose Sun Dance Canyon for no other reason than the poetry of its name! But we were not disappointed. It was a curious place.

Here at Lake Louise it is *all* poetry. Which would *you* choose to visit, Mirror Lake or Horseshoe Glen, Paradise Valley or Consolation Lakes? Just now I feel that we're truly living in Paradise, but Nan says if the serpent should glide out and spoil things we would certainly need consolation. In fact, Nan——

MIDNIGHT OF THE SAME DAY.

Oh, girls, I must finish this to-night but I shall do noth-

ing but *rave* over Lake Louise! You simply cannot imagine how perfectly lovely it has been here to-night! I was writing in a corner of the piazza when Mr. Huntington came to look me up and tell me that Mother said we might all stroll by the Lake and watch the sunset. The rest had started on, so I caught up my red cape and we followed along the path they had taken. It was still early but the wonderful transformation that we had come to see had already begun.

You must understand, C. C.'s, first of all that while Lake Louise is a real mountain lake with an altitude of over five thousand feet, yet around her rise mountains four and five thousand feet higher. Then they stand on their heads in the clear water and so seem to magnify themselves to still loftier dimensions. Just the clear blue depths of the water and the deeper blue, sharply defined reflections of the mountains would be wonderful enough, but it's the background of the picture that makes you breathless. The nearer mountains dip and divide and beyond them, gleaming against the distant sky, hangs a great white mountain of ice and snow—the Victoria Glacier.

It was this beautiful glacier that we watched as we walked by the Lake to-night and saw the sinking sun paint it one soft tint and then another and finally leave it glowing dully in a half light of almost violet hue. And then came a surprise! The half moon, tip-tilted, rose while the sky was still suffused with the afterglow, and bathed the glacier in a dreamy, ghostly light that was even more enthralling than the earlier appearance. The ice mountain seemed to move and float and fade and gleam afresh in the flitting light—for of course there were little cottony clouds to intercept and soften and sometimes darken the moon's rays.

We were simply chained to that view, and when the chimes rang out for the late dinner and Cousin Richard pulled out his watch promptly with a hungry-for-my-soup look, it just seemed as though we could not break away. Then what do you suppose Price Huntington—Priceless, that time surely—did? He simply buttonholed Cousin Richard and strolled off with him without a word to disturb the rest of us. Nan started to follow them, but decided to remain with the majority. A little later the two men came back with a basket and extra wraps. They beckoned mysteriously and we followed until we came to an ideal spot, where in the moonlight of the early evening we ate rolls and cold chicken and—oh, olives, I guess,—I don't remember what—without taking our eyes off the beautiful scene before us. We could just hear the music from the hotel and an occasional clink or crash from the dining room, but we were not *in* it, thanks be to goodness—and Price Huntington!

I see in glancing over what I have written, I haven't said anything about Paul. That's because Paul doesn't say much of anything these days himself. You know Paul. He is simply *lost* in these mountains and if we didn't find him at bed time and train time and start him in the right direction, he would just stay around contentedly and let day decline and ourselves depart without its disturbing him in the least. His sketch book is filling up with the Canadian Rockies in all perspectives and all tints, for of course he brought along his little color box with the rest of his traveling kit. I'm positive that he hasn't written a line to a soul since we started, but if he did break out into English, I'd like to be around to look over his shoulder. Perhaps you don't know it, but Paul has a "lingo" all his own made up of a bit of every

language that strikes his ear, and when fairly off he can sling words—oral or written—as fast as he can combine lines into a sketch—and that's going some.

Pardon this digression into personal reflections—not so impressive as those made by the mountains, at least, but somehow important to me.

To-morrow we leave this lovely spot and spin through some spiral tunnels—cut through solid rock—that are as remarkable in their way as any of the railroad construction we marvelled at on the Cripple Creek route last year. Beyond the tunnels somewhere lie our next stopping places—Field and Glacier—and then before we know it we'll be in Vancouver and these remarkable Canadian Rockies will be just memory to us. It would make me sad if I thought I should never see them again. They are so well worth knowing intimately! You know how at home we all love Wachusett—little bit of a mountain that it is—every inch of it? But these vast mountains demand so much more than a first acquaintance before love begins. It would have to be slow-growing, I'm sure, to be acceptable to the grand old hoary-headed giants who have waited here so many, many years.

Now I'll tell you a funny thing. While I have been writing this about "love," Paul has been whistling softly in the next room—probably by the window, the melody came to me so clearly. Now that I stop to think, I realize what he has been whistling. It must have influenced my thoughts unconsciously:

"Love me little, love me long
Is the burthen of my song,
Love that is too hot and strong
Runneth soon to waste."

Now I must creep into bed where Nan's been asleep for an hour, or I shall have crow's-feet around my eyes in the morning.

Wish you were both here!

With love,

PEGGY.

CHAPTER XII.

PAUL'S CHARACTERISTIC LETTER.

Paul Bennett, *en route* to Livingston, Montana, to his cousin, Eleanor Hunter Thornton, Brookline, Massachusetts:

My Dear and Honored Kin,—

You see how it is—been trying to get at the ink and paper this se'en-night past, but plague take it, some one is always holding me back. Ain't it a shame?

Your lovely pi'ture card depicting the attractive Village Square—"All change!"—was dooly received when we collected mail at Vancouver. It *stang* me into a sense of meh duty, which, as I suggest, I have been vainly endeavoring to overtake ever since.

Belief me, dear Nell, I have been silent, not that I loved thee less, no, nor anything else more, but the psycho-

logical combination of time and opportunity, I have not, as I say, seen, grasped and developed ere it was fled, or in other words, I have failed to *carpe diem*. So there you have it—clear's mud.

Something tells me to-day, however, that I should seize this opportunity and write. Must be my conscience. 'Pon honor, though, 'twas my definite intention at Vancouver —I have a vague idea that several or more days have elapsed since we left there—to write, address, and mail you certain pearls of thought and gratuitous reflections done in my best clear and lucid style to celebrate the fact that, sound in wind and limb, we were once more across the continent and looking out over the Pacific. But, hèlas, I did not. The days have passed so very, very—zip! as zat!

And say, speaking of Vancouver,—well, coz, some view, some view! First, the harbor, land-locked up to its neck, and in it the most tantalizing little array of steamships that ever churned the Seven Seas, all of 'em beckoning, "On to Honolulu, to Japan, to China! This way to Alaska, Australia, and the many little islands that freckle the map!" Then the oriental whiffs (snif! snif!) that put an invisible halo around each pretty boat and nearly led little Paulkins to register in the stowaway list! Finally a bunch of lofty peaks, placed just right for good, simple composition, and there you have some picture!

Oh, the great Northwest is great, all right, all right. It gets into the blood and teases you to sort of hang around, you know. A fellow could lose himself dead easy in these mountains,—and not feel sorry to be lost, either. Guess Aunt Mary Brewster can understand that. It's probably the very lure that caught Judson.

Well, it's a hard cru-el world at best—unless you're a

jelly fish. Try carrying a jelly fish around on a platter and you'll get meh meaning.

But speaking of these specimens of activity reminds me of one who wasn't,—she was a specimen all right, all right, but not self-active. Oh, no, she was a human jelly fish, though, uneasy and helpless but unwilling to stick in her natural environment. Why will such people——

Well, anyway, this one was a huge mountain of flesh with little pig eyes and flabby cheeks and wobbly chin and puffy hands. I couldn't keep from looking at her, she was so fascinatingly homely. She made an impression on me, you see. She came into the train at Portland when we went up to Cascade Locks, and tried to sit down in half the seat I was already occupying. I managed to slide out before being wholly eclipsed, or you'd never, never have seen your little cousin Paul again in this world.

I crawled under and over, and gained the aisle, and then retired to a position of 'vantage to gaze back like a beady-eyed lion who has just escaped the mouse,—you know. I decided she was interesting enough to immortalize in my sketch book, and put her in despite the attractions that glided by outside the car window. She still fascinates me. Her likeness sort of dominates the pages of my book and insists on being opened to first—if you know what I mean,—but I pray I may never meet her double!

There's a lot of interesting material like this lying around the country just waiting to be gathered in—and it deserves a more skillful hand than mine to garner it. But this character stuff is my favorite study, so I grasp my pencil firmly between thumb and forefinger and say to the subject that passes into view, serenely unconscious of my merciless scrutiny, "You're it—the 'steenth variation of type! I've got ye, blim ye! Now hold still till

I've put ye into meh hall of fame." Then I go to it like a dog after a woodchuck, and sometimes I get the 'chuck chuckling the very chuckle that caught meh fancy.

What's that? No, I never promised to write you *about* our trip. I swore, alas, to write you while I was *on* it,—and we're still on it, though jockeying along comfortably toward the grand young climax of Yellowstone.

Well, if you *won't* stop teasing me, here goes:

We sailed from Vancouver to Victoria, then to Seattle and finally to Tacoma on the far-famed Puget Sound. The skeenery was beautiful,—Wait a minute. I'll ask Peggy what to say. Descriptions are her long suit.

. . . . .

Ha! ha! I hunted up Peggy—she and Price Huntington were discussing inductive psychology on the observation platform, unmindful of the falling cinders,—and this is what she said:

"Why, yes, the scenery was pretty between Seattle and Tacoma. Yes, I'm sure it was beautiful, but I didn't take particular notice of it, for, you remember, Paul, about a dozen of us were on the upper deck singing all the songs we ever knew, and I just have a happy, hazy memory of Mount Rainier and a generally pleasant day."

Well, she was right about one thing: I remember myself it was hazy.

Tell you what, Cousin Nell, we had been pretty busy sightseeing on land and when we struck the comfort of a steamer and a stiff breeze, we simply addressed ourselves to the flippant art of recuperation.

Speaking of Peggy, I suppose she and Miss Evans,—one of the Joisey teachers we met to-day,—have solved all the problems of education. Yes, they're both deadly serious about bending the infant idea so it will be inclined.

But you know Peggy! They started in with Fribble and red balls and disobedience at two P. M. like this:

You and Jack will wonder if we didn't miss the old Mountaineer on some of our land slides, so I must tell you that in Portland and Seattle we did join the rest of the automaniacs and bubbled as gaily as the gayest. We have some hills in New England but we haven't got a corner on 'em, for they have stuck some up here that are pretty steepish, too. At Portland, I remember, we humped along over roads that were all to the merry and came to a stop at the highest point in the city, where we had a magnificent panorama of town and river and logs and Mt. Hood and immense trees and roses as big as cabbages and various other attractions,—for Oregon has some great stuff to show in Nature's own.

Seattle has a tower building she's mighty proud of. When you get to the top you're out of town,—that kind, you know. Really I was obliged to take a drag at meh smelling salts when I beheld it, just to see if I was fully

present and responsible. Man gets terribly ambitious every so often to finish the Tower of Babel. Maybe he'll do it yet, and then we can walk right into the courts of Mars or shake hands with Venus from the last elevator stop.

Speaking of stops, however, we made one at Cascade Locks—after escaping the Jelly Fish—and took a steamer down the Columbia River. Mt. Hood kept her eye on us so we couldn't steal a single can of salmon, no, not one, even though we were given a splendid opportunity at a cannery by the riverside. It was a deliciously slippery, slidy place. Littlejohn would love to play around in there, and there are plenty of Chinamen to keep him out of the caldrons of seething hot water if he got curious.

By the way, there were some Totem Poles at Seattle, but when I said I wanted to tote 'em home, nobody took me seriously. I thought you'd like one for your front yard. I did the best I could for you, however, when I mailed you a pi'ture of the same from the home of old Chief Seattle—'um big Injun! And that reminds me; have they put an extra postman on your line yet to carry the sooveneer cards we're sending?

Mother sends one from every peak and pond, I'm sure, but I'm equally positive that your brother Richard is not so faithful. Dick is reeling 'round in a rosy-colored haze,—you'd think he was the advance agent of a honeymoon special. Now sit still; don't be alarmed. Nan keeps him moving, that's all. She has us all on a little string wound about her slender wrist—Dick and Price Huntington and Yours Truly. We go on all fours or trot along behind or fade away entirely, according to her dictum. I don't feel altogether reconciled to Nan since she gave Peggy one last year, but I dance when she whistles—

just to see her whistle. I'm going to do a sketch of her in oils some day—pouting!

Peggy is rather quiet in contrast but I suppose she prefers it that way. She rather scorns flirtatious follies, you know, and affects the reserve of the unreachable. Bein' her brother and esteemin' her at her sterling valuation, I could wish she were not quite so severe for her own happiness,—but, Himmel, better have her nun-like than Nan-like in the long run, when you come to think it over.

I'm feeling along—do you perceive me groping for expression?—to find a way to answer certain naughty insinuations contained in your *bon voyage* note,—the note arriving upon the eve of our departure that sent me into *such* a state of despondency. English diction has no adjectives comprehending enough to describe my real feelings on that dawn of an adventurous to-morrow.

Now why you thought there was need of timely and cousinly advice to warn me against the possible snares set to entrap this tender little heart of mine, I have not yet fathomed. To be sure, traveling *is* dangerous. One may run blindly into the very arms of designing mothers of young and charming daughters, or worse yet, by some mad, mad chance into the hands—oh, breathe it not—of the girls themselves! But *me*—I am adamant! Well I know that a impecunious artist must have no thoughts of running in double harness for y'ars and y'ars.

However, mindful of your Peggyish warnings,—sisterly, I mean,—when, after this, the susceptible ones come flocking around, I shall give them a low, mournful stare and, waving my hand slowly and sadly, say in wide, hollow accents, "Back, oh ye frivolous, back to the tall pines. I am not for you. Begone!!" Just think of the many broken little hearts—but it can't be helped. I will

be good, dear cousin, even though to be good is to be lonesome.

I have seen one lufly goil (on horseback—in khaki) from the window of the car as we passed by a village in the foothills of the Selkirks. She flashed her pretty teeth at me—and was gone. Otherwise I have seen none whom I cannot live without.

This, then, is the reply that my mind has been long contemplating, although I sent out into the disty mistance a wireless "Thanks" in immediate acknowledgment of your solicitude, and trust that it arrived at its true affinity long since.

Wish you were to be on the reception committee when we pull into Gardiner to-morrow and with us when we assault the main gateway to the Yellowstone. We're wondering who will make up our coaching party for the six days of driving in the Park. We'd like to be in a stage seating eleven, for that would make a jolly crowd. But may Heaven supply four good fellows—or girls—or both —to complete our number, else we may draw Jelly Fishes and Sticklebacks,—and you know yourself there are more comfortable companions.

However, it might be still worse to take on a bridal couple such as we have discovered on the train to-day. Everybody's speculating how they came to hitch up,—they're sure the original Misfits. She's sixty-five, if she's a day, and he's about thirty. Of course she's got herself up like thirty, too, from her bleached blonde wig to her Double A pumps. But "there's something in her manner, there's something in her smile,"—that doesn't deceive us a little bit. Her lufly complexion reminds you of hand-painted china, her lacy gown and saucy hat and veil of sweet sixteen, but—tut, tut!—the little wrinkles under her chinny, chin, chin and a few naughty wilful stray white

hairs: they talk like sixty and will betray her secret unless she's very, very careful.

But to return to the three-seated coach we hope to engage. The two extras ride with the driver, and between you and me, Peggy already has her eye on that seat beside the driver. But she doesn't realize yet that every one of the eleven passengers will be equally ready to share it. We'll see some fun over that coveted place—or I have another guess coming.

Believe you didn't meet Price Huntington when he made his flying trip to Boston last May and took us to see ourselves as the movies see us. But you'll be likely to meet him in the future! When he joined us at Winnipeg, he was welcomed like an overdue Liner and he's been equally welcome ever since. He's a lawyer, but claims he's only on the first round of the ladder. I've an idea he means to climb—but not on the shoulders of any boosting grafter.

He's made himself solid with Mother, eats out of Nan's hand like a wise-eyed puppy, and hits it off fairly well with Peggy when she's not wrapped up in scenery and reserve.

Dear! dear! here it is almost the dinner hour! Where, oh where, are the time gone?

I don't believe you need count on another epistle from me before we hit the home trail,—so breathe easy. The demands of this trip use up most of my wind and all my brain, so that in those scarce, rare, leisure moments that semi-occasionally occur I feel about as much like tackling pen and paper as I do the pie course at Thanksgiving dinner, previous courses having been justly dealt with.

Speaking of pen and paper, while there's ink there's soap,—a statement which means much or little depending upon whether you use your own leaky fountain pen or

borrow Peggy's, which I forgot to do. Tish! Also, piffle!

So I must wield the scrubbing bristles and pumice stone before I venture into the diner. Miss Girard—she's another Joisey pedagogue—has promised to show me some Northern California snapshots afterward,—and she may not appreciate that ink spots are merely signs of my calling. She was very fetching last evening in white over blanc patie de foi gras. Her companion somewhat sim'-lar, only less so (consid'able).

I must toin in eoily to-night for I'm putting in sleep by the yard in preparation for the long days in the Yellowstone, and am feeling fit as the proverbial fiddler.

The length of this letter demonstrates that my love—aforementioned—is quite unlimited, and proves my devotion 'sdeep as the——

Give my best to Jack and Littlejohn and tell 'em what they're missing.

Y'rs to a cinder,

-Sign of the Kid.

Everly,

Paul.

BOOK III.—THE YELLOWSTONE.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SURPRISE AT THE HOT SPRINGS.

A young girl was pacing back and forth, back and forth on the long sheltered piazza of the Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs. Occasionally she stopped and tapped the toes of her neat walking boots impatiently against the railing as she looked off across the green lawn, past the buildings of Fort Yellowstone, to the wide roadway that swept up from the distant railroad station at Gardiner. Then she resumed her restless promenading, hesitating now and then beside the chair of an older companion who was immersed in a book descriptive of the marvels of Yellowstone Park.

"Do sit down, Marjorie," the reader looked up to exclaim at length. "You will surely tire yourself out and be quite unfit for the excursion you wish to take this afternoon."

"But suppose they should not come!" the girl returned, halting suddenly. "After traveling all this long way to surprise them, what *should* we do, Miss Harper?"

"We should take the trip through the Park without them, my dear, of course," replied the

calm lady, adjusting her glasses and turning again to the fascinations of her book.

"Oh, but they *will* come,—they *must!*" cried the other, starting again down the piazza. "This *is* the nineteenth of July, isn't it, Miss Harper?" she turned back to ask. "We haven't made any mistake in the date, have we?"

"Come here, Marjorie Deming." Miss Harper laid aside her book, took off her eye glasses, by a slight motion wound up the chain attached to them and hung them precisely on a gold hook hidden under her lace collar. "Now, Marjorie, listen quietly to me. You must not allow yourself to become excited or overanxious in the heat of the day. Let us calmly face the situation: You are quite sure that it was the intention of Mrs. Bennett and her son and daughter to come with friends to Yellowstone Park this summer?"

Marjorie Deming's silver laugh rang out at that.

"Oh, Miss Harper, that sounds so odd! Certainly I am sure,—have we not come from England on just that certainty?"

"Very well. Be patient, my dear. When did you receive the letter giving their itinerary in detail,—that is, the dates of their arrival at Banff, Vancouver and Gardiner, for instance?"

"About the first of July," replied Marjorie, smiling at Miss Harper's deliberation.

"And they were to start soon after that, I believe," said the chaperone. "We have no reason to suppose that their plans have not been carried out as they expected. Therefore it appears to me that we are quite justified in anticipating their

arrival this noon,—in fact, they are due within half an hour, if I am not mistaken. There is, you see, no excuse for the slightest concern until after that time has elapsed. Meanwhile, suppose you go to the writing room and prepare your usual letter for mailing to your father. We shall have no opportunity during our tour of the Park to dispatch our correspondence after we leave this hotel."

Miss Harper removed her glasses from their hook, stretched the slender chain to its limit and resumed her reading as Marjorie turned away and hastened to follow her suggestion.

She was passing the desk in the lobby when she heard a masculine voice inquire of the clerk concerning some friends who had made reservations. She stopped, arrested by a sudden thought. Then she, too, stepped to the desk.

"Will you tell me, please," she asked, "if rooms have been reserved for Mrs. Bennett and her party, and when they are expected?"

The clerk glanced quickly at his records and then at the clock. "Rooms are reserved for the nineteenth—to-day—and the party is due in twenty minutes. What can I do for you, sir?"

Marjorie glanced over her shoulder and then made way quickly for the young man who waited just behind her. She hurried on to the writing room, her face aglow at the fresh assurance she had obtained of her friends' coming.

She wrote a hasty note to her father and started to go back to Miss Harper. At the exit of the room, however, she ran abruptly into a man who was just entering. She stumbled and

would have fallen but for his quickness, and even as it was, both tripped over the end of a heavy rug and were thrown against the side of the door.

"I beg your pardon," said a voice contritely, and Marjorie looked up to see the tall young man who had been in line behind her at the desk. "I am very awkward. I hope you are not hurt."

"Not at all, thank you," replied Marjorie, moving on into the corridor.

"I beg your pardon again, but I really couldn't help overhearing your question at the desk," he continued, following her eagerly. "I was greatly interested. I wonder if—can it be possible that you as well as I are waiting for the arrival of the same party—from Hilton—Massachusetts?"

Marjorie Deming's blue eyes flew wide open and her cheeks took on a deeper pink. She gazed straight up into the dark eyes bent upon her.

"Oh,—oh!" she began impulsively. Then she looked down with sudden calmness and added with more reserve, "Will you—will you please come and meet Miss Harper? Will you—please?"

The somewhat mystified young man could do nothing but follow, for Marjorie walked rapidly out to the piazza and her chaperone.

Miss Harper looked up inquiringly and then searchingly, but Marjorie said nothing. Then to Miss Harper's calm face came a look of keenness and alertness,—the "chaperone look" of responsibility and defense.

The tall young man recognized the significance of that expression and hastened, cap in hand, to

name himself and to explain his temerity in addressing Marjorie.

"I am Franklin Arnold," he said simply. "I became acquainted with Miss Peggy Bennett and her brother Paul in Boston last spring. I knew of their plans to visit the Yellowstone, but thought it impossible to join them. After they had started for the Canadian Rockies, however, I found I could get away. So I came directly here to meet them,—in fact, as we say in Boston, 'to beat them to it.'"

He stopped and smiled, and Miss Harper found herself smiling sympathetically in return.

"That is all my story, except that I decided to surprise them here, arrived yesterday about noon, and happened to overhear this young lady inquiring for them just now at the desk."

"Yes, I did inquire, Miss Harper, and the clerk said that Mrs. Bennett was expected to-day."

"By the way," added the Young Doctor, "I guess I can identify myself—if there's time."

He glanced down the road, whither Marjorie's gaze was frequently turning, but saw no cloud of dust to indicate the coming of the tallyhos from Gardiner. Then he fumbled for his bill-book, according to habit, and brought out a slip of paper, a blue print, which he handed to Miss Harper.

She recognized at a glance the three who had laughingly posed in Boston Common for this picture:—the tall, young man stood in the centre, Peggy Bennett looked up at him roguishly on one side and Paul lounged in a characteristic attitude on the other.

Miss Harper passed the photograph to Marjorie and extended her hand cordially. "Your identification is complete, Mr. Arnold," she remarked. "Perhaps you would be interested to know that we, too, have planned a surprise——"

"There they come! There are the coaches!" interrupted Marjorie, pointing excitedly.

"Yes, they'll be here in a moment. The train must have been right on time," rejoined Franklin Arnold, sharing her eagerness. "Then we can be properly introduced," he added softly, smiling into Marjorie's glowing face.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile the train from Livingston had long since drawn up to the quaint log station at Gardiner and discharged its scores of passengers. As they swarmed out upon the platform like ants from a disturbed ant-hill, within and without the cars excited voices were raised.

"Here we are!"

"Is this Gardiner?"

"All ready, Nan?"

"Shall I tighten that strap, Mother?"

"At last! At last!"

"Is this *Gardiner?*"

"I've lost my ticket! . . . Oh, no, here it is!"

"Get a grip on your grips, everybody!"

"All out! Do not leave any articles in the car!"

"*Is* my hat on straight?"

"I've lost my veil, I know I have!"

"Isn't this it, caught in the seat?"

"What? Yes, this is Gardiner."

"There are the tallyhos!"

"Come on! Let's get a seat on top!"

Six beautiful horses stamped in assumed impatience before each waiting tallyho, pointing their ears and curving their necks in pretended alarm at the arrival of the train from Livingston. They were held in firmly by the drivers of the big, two-storied coaches while the eager tourists descended from the train and hurried toward the nearest conveyances.

"Let's take the second coach," suggested Price Huntington, seeing that otherwise the party was bound to be separated by the crowding of their fellow passengers.

"Good idea!" responded Dick Hunter, using one of the suit-cases he carried to steer Nan gently in the direction indicated.

"Come on, Mother, climb up," cried Peggy, as one after another they gained the coveted places. "There's room for us all."

"Room for us?" asked the young Bridegroom with a self-conscious smile, arriving with the fair but not youthful Adeliza on his arm.

"Sure; up you come," called Huntington heartily, giving a hand first to the simpering Bride and then to the boyish husband.

"Dorsey, dear, do be careful," cautioned the Bride, shaking her blonde curls. "Where is my lavender bag, love?"

"I thought you had it," he answered, startled.

"Good Heavens!" she shrieked, lifting her white-gloved hands skyward.

The Bridegroom was down on the ground and running like a deer for the train before she could utter a single reproach. Those watching from

the tallyho saw the conductor appear on the steps of one of the cars just as the man reached them. From his hand dangled the lost lavender bag. The relieved Bridegroom seized it, mumbled brief thanks, and raced back.

"My smelling salts, quick, love," the fair Bride gasped as he scrambled up beside her once more.

"Brace up, Adeliza. Everything's safe," he said in some confusion, handing her the green glass bottle of salts upside down.

The little incident had absorbed the attention of the party from Hilton until its end, but now as the tallyho started, second in line for the five-mile drive to Mammoth Hot Springs, they turned from the amusing Misfits to the impressive vistas before them.

Their first view of the Park of Mystery surprised them. Scarcely had they passed through the great lava entrance arch and read its inscription: "For the benefit and enjoyment of the people," before they were gazing upon mountains of vast height and threading a cañon of marvellous beauty. They had been thinking of geysers and barren wastes, and here were timber-covered ranges and river-floored valleys. Electric Peak, the highest mountain in the Park looked down upon them and Sepulcher Mountain loomed tomb-like on their right.

" 'Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here,' " muttered Richard, looking back as they lost sight of the lava gate. "They say these acres are the De'il's own."

"Oh, Mr. Hunter!" protested Nan. "I think this is just heavenly."

Price Huntington overhearing both remarks, said to Mrs. Bennett and Peggy, "I wonder what Dante would say about it. Would he find inspiration here for the Paradiso or the Inferno?"

Paul turned around suddenly from his place in front of the trio and drawled: "Don't know a blim thing about Dante, but I'm a powerful good judge of inspiration. I should say there were several tons of uplift just here."

"We may have another opinion by the time we reach 'Hell's Half Acre,' and if any one really gets a glimpse of his Satanic Majesty——"

"Oh, don't," squirmed Nan.

"Well, he better watch out, that's all," concluded Dick in a hollow voice.

"Very strange things happen here, Nan," added Paul, warningly, gazing askance at the rushing waters of Gardiner River past which they were whirling. "Mother, wasn't it only last year that a bear ate up a careless young school teacher?"

"Paul Bennett!" squealed Nan nervously. "It did not!"

"And the year before there was a hold-up and all the coaches were robbed," added Dick, nodding soberly. "Um-hum. Queer place, this."

"Speaking of hold-ups," ventured the interested Bridegroom, "we were out on the observation car last evening and the brakeman told us of three or four hold-ups that had occurred on the railroad somewhere between Spokane and Livingston,—near Hell Gate, I believe it was. There were four masked bandits in the last one and

they got about forty thousand dollars in currency from registered mail packages."

"Maybe we'll get mixed up in a hold-up ourselves," remarked Paul hopefully.

"Why will you talk about such dreadful things?" protested Nan again. And the Bride nodded under her wide flapping hat in agreement. "We have had a safe trip so far and nothing is likely to happen to us in the Park. Peggy, let's make 'em stop talking like this."

Nan looked around as she spoke, and then laughed. Peggy, sitting beside her mother at the end of the seat, her back turned toward the entire chattering party, had heard neither Nan's remark nor any of those preceding it. She was lost in the wonder and beauty of the drive, in the hurrying, splashing river, in the rugged, picturesque valley, in the towering ranges, in the lofty peak above which an eagle hovered with outspread wings.

And to the swaying and rumbling rhythm of the big tallyho, to the trot-trit-trotting of the pacing horses, she was half-consciously rhyming:

"Beyond the gate
What wonders wait?
What language here doth Nature speak?
What breathless heights,
What haunting sights
The bird must spy from yonder peak!"

"Wake up, Peggy!" cried Dick, whose spirits had soared higher with each moment of the ride in the clear, invigorating air. "If you must

moon, wait till evening when you'll have company. She's full to-night, you know."

Peggy came back somewhat reluctantly from the realm of her own wandering thoughts. More and more she was acquiring the trick of retiring into that land of dreams at will, but she had chided herself over the rudeness of doing so "in company," and she blushed now as she realized how far into the astral distance her mind had wandered.

"All present and accounted for," she replied promptly. "I've been taking a census of my senses, that's all."

"Oh," groaned Dick. "Do you call that a pun? The mountain air is affecting her already, friends. Put her down below, down below, somebody!"

Mrs. Bennett smiled, glad that the joking passed over and about her, leaving her as free as Peggy longed to be to gather her own first impressions. Peggy had exclaimed in the White Mountains, "Only give me twenty-nine minutes to think my own thoughts!" And, with a similar longing, Mrs. Bennett now determined to seize at least the coveted "twenty-nine minutes" for herself during this five-mile drive.

For many years she had wished for just this experience. She had seen remarkable places in Europe, especially in Switzerland, on her long ago wedding trip and in Italy during her brief residence on Lake Como, but she had always reserved the opinion that at home in America were marvels equaling and surpassing even those foreign wonders.

Now, she reveled in each turn of the splendid road over the rushing, churning, foaming Gardiner River, in each rugged, rocky, overhanging precipice, in each outstanding peak and pinnacle. And by the time the coaches drew up with a last spectacular flourish before the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, she felt really adjusted to her new environment and ready to clamber down from her lofty seat and plunge eagerly into the first of the six days of sightseeing allotted to Yellowstone Park.

"Well, for the love of Mich-ael Angelo!" she heard Paul exclaim as he turned after helping her from the coach.

"Well, for the love of—yourself!" echoed a laughing voice in answer.

"Why,—it's Doctor Arnold!" cried Peggy, jumping down beside her mother by the aid of Price Huntington's hand and running forward in greeting. "Why—why—how did *you* get here? Mother, Mother, this is Doctor Arnold,—Franklin Arnold, you know, of Boston."

"Massachusetts," added the Young Doctor, bowing in acknowledgment and enjoying greatly the surprise he had created.

Then Peggy, bubbling over with pleasurable excitement, introduced him to Nan Cummings and finally to Price Huntington, who had hung back modestly, busying himself with the stack of suitcases piled on the platform beside him. If Price, seeing Peggy's happy face, greeted Franklin a little stiffly, no one was conscious of it, for the Young Doctor immediately turned and

drew forward from the shadow of a broad pillar the young girl who had been hiding there.

With head down and outstretched arms, she darted out and buried her face on Peggy's shoulder. Then twisting about, she clasped supple white fingers over Peggy's eyes, and shaking her head warningly at the rest of the party, exclaimed, "Guess who it is!"

"I—can't!" gasped Peggy, standing stockstill.

"Do please try," urged the voice behind her.

"It can't be you, it can't, because you are in England!" protested Peggy in a puzzled fashion. "Mother, whom do we know with a voice like Marjorie Deming's and—*hands* like hers?"

"There's no one but Marjorie with that voice," replied her mother, smiling.

"Nor those hands," added Paul to himself, thrusting his own into his pockets. "Gee, she's prettier than ever. I'd like to paint her—a sort of blue-gold, Burne-Jonesy effect."

"Well, it *is* I," cried Marjorie, darting around in front of Peggy as she took her hands away; "and I can't be in England because, oh, joyful day, I am here!"

Peggy seized Marjorie and drew her close.

"I can hardly believe it!" she exclaimed slowly. "Annette Cummings, come here. *Is* this Marjorie Deming of Ivy Manor, Buckinghamshire, England? Is it she in the flesh or spirit?"

Nan, trying to get her own arms around Marjorie's neck in welcome, giggled.

"Seems to me she has a little more flesh than of yore, and she's certainly shown some spirit in getting all the way over from England!"

Miss Harper, meanwhile, had come forward to greet Mrs. Bennett; and in a moment more general introductions were making all of the old and new friends into "Yellowstone acquaintances," a term which often comes to signify lasting friendships as well.

CHAPTER XIV.

NATURE: THE ARTIST.

It was not until afternoon when the crowd of newcomers started for a long tour of the formations nearest Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, that the Hilton party had an opportunity to ask Marjorie what good fortune brought her to join them at Yellowstone Park.

"It is quite simple," she exclaimed. "Father decided to give up his American trip for this summer and to go instead with Mother and little sister Elizabeth to Italy. That left Miss Harper free to travel with me as usual, and Father and Mother consented to our coming to America just in time to arrive here ahead of you."

"It's perfectly fine to have you with us," said Peggy, smiling at Marjorie happily.

"Superfine," echoed Paul honestly. "Marjorie, let me carry your sunshade. It's piping hot walking in this lime dust."

"Crinch, crunch, crinch, crunch," sang Peggy, digging her heels into the crumbly, chalky soil. "The white glare in your eyes is like unto that on a snowy midwinter day back home, but there the resemblance ceases. Whew! isn't this choky?"

"Do you find it hard walking, Miss Peggy?" asked Franklin Arnold, stepping up beside her

and not seeing that Price Huntington behind him had been about to offer her a raised umbrella.

"I was just trying to think what it was like. It's not right to compare it with snow; no, nor with sand."

"It is like nothing but itself, Miss Peggy, and I imagine you'll find that true of every other unique thing in the Park, also."

"Sniff! Sniff! What can I sniff?" asked Nan, running up to them with some difficulty and wrinkling up her small nose comically.

"The first faint fumes from His Majesty's domains," Dick suggested, puffing a little from his exertions in trying to keep up with her. "Paul, just take a look at these colors, will you?"

Beside them, like irregularly curving steps, great limestone bowls, overflowing with clear, brilliant blue water, rose one above the other. Higher and higher the water-filled terraces climbed until, forming a lofty hill, they spread out into an almost flat plateau from which wisps of steam rose here and there and floated away. The edges of the great overflowing bowls were hung with prismatic pendants and beautifully stained by the deposits of the springs and the action of the hot water.

"Isn't it wonderful!" exclaimed a new voice, and there in all the glory of her delicate gown, white pumps, veil-draped hat and little Groom was the blonde Bride.

Marjorie Deming, who had not seen this vision before, gazed in open-eyed amazement, but Franklin Arnold, equally taken by surprise,

turned away and choked in his effort to control his laughter.

"Wonderful, indeed," he said after a moment, but he was not speaking of the terraces.

"Come up higher," called the soldier who had been detailed to guide them. He stood at the edge of the plateau above and beckoned a little peremptorily. He had seen all this many times and knew besides how many other marvels awaited the travelers before their walk should end. "Come up,—but keep well away from the springs!"

As Mrs. Bennett and Miss Harper, walking more slowly but also more steadily than the younger members of the party, heard this warning, they hastened their steps in some anxiety. But the springs themselves advertised their own dangerous characteristics in language that could not be mistaken, and the two chaperones found their charges at discreet distances from the open boiling, bubbling pools that dotted the lofty plain.

Choking steam, fanned by a passing breeze, met them as they gained the summit. As Mrs. Bennett inhaled the sulphurous fumes, a strange feeling swept over her. Where had she breathed such odors? When had she seen such a weird expanse, with mountains in the background and——

Suddenly she realized that she was recalling in this strange setting her dream of Aunt Mary Brewster's prodigal son. She looked around searchingly. No, this was not the mountainous valley of her vision! Yet—it held some elusive

resemblance to it. Could it be that she should yet really recognize it—perhaps in this remarkable Park?

"Mother, come!" Peggy's voice interrupted her musings. "Did you ever see anything so clear?"

Peggy was standing as close to one of the mammoth hot springs as she dared and pointing into its transparent depths. The basin of the pool seemed shallow, so very distinct was its crystalline formation, and yet they knew it to be exceptionally deep. Against one side of the bowl lay a horseshoe entirely covered by the calcareous deposit of the spring, and other objects foreign to the place testified that tourists had cast into the water various souvenirs in order to note their mineral transformation.

"'*Jupiter omnipotens*'!" exclaimed Richard Hunter as the guide indicated Jupiter Terrace, one of the most marvelous of the step-like series of springs.

"'*Jupiter pluvius*,'" added Price Huntington, laughing. "Jupiter weeps, his tears overflow, and running down his limestone cheeks, crystallize——"

"Into pearls,—like the words of the Beautiful Princess," added Nan Cummings, echoing his laughter.

"Here's a chance for somebody," Paul was calling out. "They say this is Pulpit Terrace."

"The Pulpits are already occupied," said his mother quickly. "Nature is preaching a wonderful sermon here. We can't improve on her text:

'God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.' "

"You are right, madam," said the guide, respectfully. "Those of us who live among these marvels all the time never get over their mystery. Now, if you feel equal to another mile or two, I'll show you more things that even the scientists have never quite explained."

As the party followed the guide across the lime-dusted plain, Peggy looked down with some dismay at the skirt of her blue serge traveling suit. She had been so eager to chat with Marjorie at the hotel that she had not taken time to change her clothes, and alas, now she had reason to envy her silk or cotton-clad companions. The crumbly formation over which they were walking sent up little clouds of white dust at each step and Peggy's blue skirt had already taken on a gray tinge. It felt heavy, too, as though the sifting lime had settled in each fold and seam.

Marjorie in white linen and Nan in light blue looked cool and comfortable. Peggy's mother in the soft pongee which her unerring taste had chosen was as dainty and fresh as when they had started out. However, Peggy was not going to have her pleasure spoiled by a mere skirt, so she plodded along sturdily after the guide and forgot her discomfort in her interest in what each moment revealed.

Of the strange caves, springs, steam vents, peculiar deposits and curiosities without number that the interested visitors saw within a distance of three miles on that afternoon's walk, Peggy

remembered longest the odd cave called the Devil's Kitchen. It impressed her partly because of its name and an incident which came to be associated with it, but its unique interest lay in the fact that it gave her an opportunity to descend below the thin, vibrating earth's crust, to see a mysterious subterranean thermal spring and to feel its intense heat.

Steep steps led down into the steaming depths and the sightseers who ventured over them appeared again at the opening on the surface with flushed, hot faces.

"I can testify that it's baking day in the Devil's Kitchen," sighed Paul as he immerged mopping his moist brow.

"Methinks His Nibs built his culinary department close to the infernal throne room," Franklin Arnold remarked feelingly as he came up from below and thrust his perspiring face out for a breath of fresh air.

"How long do you suppose the Devil has kept his kitchen fire going?" asked Paul of the guide as they all started on again.

"Oh, some thousands of years," he replied. "The geologists claim that the hot springs were twenty-five thousand years building up Terrace Mountain, so you can judge——"

"Where is Nan?" asked Dick, interrupting the guide abruptly.

"What! Isn't all the party here?" demanded the guide, stopping with a startled expression. "I counted everybody before we left the Devil's Kitchen. Who's missing?"

"Miss Cummings," announced Richard, turn-

ing and running back over the way they had just come. "Nan!" he called. "Nan!"

"Everybody wait right here," ordered the soldier-guide curtly. "Understand?"

Then he ran after Dick. The two men reached the Devil's Kitchen again without seeing Nan, and bent over the opening.

"Nan!" called Dick anxiously, as the guide pushed by him and began to descend.

"Oh, hello," came the answer in Nan's familiar tones. "I'll be right up."

The guide did not give her time to change her mind, but assisted her with rather unnecessary force to the surface.

She drew herself up a little resentfully, only to face Richard's disapproving countenance.

"Nan Cummings, what possessed you to come back here alone?" Dick demanded peremptorily.

"That is what I would like to know," added the guide, his face still dark with anger. He realized what she did not: that he would have been held responsible had she met with any mishap while in his party.

"I do not understand your attitude, Mr. Hunter, nor yours, Mr. Guide," Nan replied with an air of offended dignity. "I merely missed my handkerchief and returned for it. I found it at the foot of the ladder, thank you," and Nan turned and walked away in quite the wrong direction.

The guide stared after her a second and then grinned at the disgruntled Dick.

"A little peppery, maybe, but I like 'em well seasoned," he said. Then he took a few long

strides and overtook Nan. "This way, Miss. Myself and the young man who came to find you, we won't bite, and you might find yourself a long ways from home if you kep' on in that direction."

Nan looked a little startled at that but followed the guide without a word or glance toward Richard.

"Where *were* you, Nan?" cried Peggy as they joined the waiting group.

"I went back to turn the cookie-pan in the Devil's oven, of course," she answered flippantly, and then proceeded to devote herself exclusively to the newest acquaintance, Doctor Arnold.

The rest of the party were amused at Nan's transparent tactics but devoutly hoped that she would spare them another such scare. The Park was too full of real as well as fancied dangers to be a safe place for independently wandering maidens, besides which the laws were emphatic in their restrictions and were rigidly enforced by the soldiers stationed at Fort Yellowstone.

But Nan's good nature seemed fully restored after an interesting visit to the Bison Herd and to the "Buffalo Jones House," where the keeper of the herd lodged amid his trophies. On his walls and floor and about his room were displayed the skins of all the wild animals inhabiting the Park. No visitor, however, no matter how adept with gun or trap can hope to duplicate this collection, for the Park is indeed "a zoological reservation where big game may roam unmolested by the intrusion of man." Guns are not allowed in the Park at all unless sealed by the Government at the entrance.

That evening, true to Dick's prophecy, the moon came up clear and full and shone invitingly over the glittering terraces and chalky hills. Some of the hotel guests stayed indoors and listened to music or danced the latest steps, unmoved apparently by the beckoning splendor outside; but most of the Hilton party and their friends responded to the lure of the moonlight, sauntering about under the stars until warned of the lateness of the hour by the sweet, persuasive call of taps sounded by the bugler at Fort Yellowstone.

Paul and Dick, in fact, spent an hour or two of the evening in the fort and were taken through the Army Barracks by their soldier-guide of the afternoon, who proved to be a native of New England and glad to see faces from his old home state.

Peggy and Marjorie, Price and Franklin, meanwhile, wandered back over the trail they had followed earlier in the day,—up the dusty, crunching hill, past the tall, stark shell of an extinct spring called Liberty Cap, past the softly bubbling, steaming hot springs to the plateau just above Jupiter Terrace. There they found a spot where they could sit and watch the ever-flowing mineral water slip away over the orange and yellow deposit to join the Boiling River that creeps through subterranean channels to pour itself finally—an immense stream of hot water—into the Gardiner River.

They looked down across the man-made lawn to the twinkling lights of the great hotel and to the lesser illuminations of Fort Yellowstone.

They lifted their eyes to the Terrace Mountain and to the block-house on Capitol Hill, which, Price remarked, was built in 1879 in the days of Indian incursions into the Park.

"The guide told me to-day an interesting fact about this same Capitol Hill," said the Young Doctor when Price had finished. "It seems that the Government has spent a mint of money making the fine roads we are to travel over this week. But this Capitol Hill has made their task a lot easier around here. The composition of the Hill itself is a natural mixture of sand and gravel in just about the right proportions to use as concrete. And they've had little to do but cart it off and apply it."

"Well, that's one more instance to prove that the geology of this place is mighty surprising," commented Price thoughtfully.

"I hope you will tell me about it whenever you can," said Marjorie earnestly. "My father likes geology. He would almost rather roam around the dry bed of a river with a hammer and notebook than to fish in a river that's full,—and he is fond of fishing, too."

"We may get some fishing at Yellowstone Lake," said the Young Doctor. "Should you like that?"

"Oh, yes, yes. Peggy, do you remember how we went fishing at Lake Nomer the day we visited Camp Surprise?"

And then the two young men wanted to know all about it; so away out there in Yellowstone Park, far from the quiet little lake near Hilton, Peggy and Marjorie talked once more about the

boys and the girls, the parties and the picnics that had made Marjorie's visit in the hill town memorable. Then when the bugle sounded, they walked slowly back to the hotel, and the Young Doctor strolling beside Marjorie looked at the stars and laughed.

"Miss Peggy," he called, "do you remember Miss Bentley's 'lucky star'? It's brought me the trip she wished for me. If you can find it in the sky to-night, I would like to wish on it myself."

As Peggy searched the star-studded sky for a reply, Marjorie said, "And what would you wish for, Doctor Arnold?"

"Some time when I know you very, very much better, I will tell you," he answered, smiling at her and at his secret thought.

CHAPTER XV.

COACH 118.

Early the next morning Peggy was dreaming of strange harmonies produced by eight bubbling hot springs placed in a row. Each was attuned to a tone of the scale and the chord of the whole was alternately softened by muffled moonbeams or emphasized by staccato hoof-beats. Very, very gradually the weird music faded, but still she was conscious of rhythm and melody.

Pat, pat, pat; pat, pat, pat—Suddenly Peggy realized what that was and opened her eyes. Nan Cummings was bending over her, patting her shoulder rhythmically and saying,

"Hark, hark, hark; hear, hear, hear! What's this sound in thine ear?"

Peggy struggled into full consciousness and replied, "That's reveille. What time is it?"

"Six o'clock," answered Nan briefly. "Goodness, I thought you would never wake up! I've been awake hours."

"Why? Couldn't you get to sleep?" asked Peggy, yawning sleepily herself.

"Oh, certainly. I didn't want to after I had tried it,—it was worse than staying awake. First time I went to sleep I dreamed I'd fallen off Eagle Cliff and broken every bone in my body.

I lay awake and shivered awhile, but finally slumbered again. This time I dreamed I'd tumbled into the fire in the Devil's Kitchen and burned up all but my nose. When I woke up, I was covered with perspiration and scared stiff. I felt cautiously and found my nose, but I didn't dare to go to sleep again. It would have been awful to wake up and not find myself here at all!"

"Poor Nan!" laughed Peggy. "You won't feel much like a forty-mile drive to-day, I'm afraid."

"On the contrary I feel just like it," contradicted Nan. "However, I certainly am thankful we're not to ride in a noisy dusty train but in a nice comfortable quiet stagecoach."

Nice and comfortable their conveyance certainly proved when, loaded with passengers and suitcases, it started away from the hotel two hours later, eighth in a line of over twenty large, four-horse Park coaches. But quiet—Nan changed her mind about that characteristic long before the half-way station was reached that noon.

Perhaps it was the spirit of freedom after the restrictions of train travel, perhaps it was the intoxicating air of the high altitude, perhaps it was the presence of the Misfits whom Heaven had sent to complete the number of passengers required for Coach 118,—or it may even have been, as Peggy insisted, the influence of the Hoodoos—enormous, crazy-looking boulders passed early on the drive,—but whatever the cause there was no doubt about the effect that some wild

element produced upon the young men of the party. No sooner had the coach threaded the winding passages of Silver and Golden Gates, past Rustic Falls and over the concrete Viaduct, than pandemonium broke loose.

The four "detached" boys had somehow provided themselves with instruments guaranteed to break the silence of any well-behaved neighborhood. Paul leaned forward from the rear seat and blew a merry blast upon his tin horn not far from the tip of Peggy's right ear; Price Huntington puffed out his smooth cheeks and sounded his gaudily-striped siren whistle close by her other ear. Not to be outdone, Franklin Arnold, sitting with Peggy and Marjorie in the middle seat, produced a harmonica and tried to prove that he could play "Home, Sweet Home," with variations; while Dick Hunter swung around from his position of dignity beside the two chaperones and attempted a rattling accompaniment with bones.

The horses started at the sudden noise and Frank Arnold called out, "Hold on a minute, fellows." Then he stood up and leaned out a little over the side of the coach. "Say,—hello!—Mr. Driver!" He looked back at the now silent company. "Does anybody here know——"

"Jackson," prompted Paul. "I overheard the starter at the hotel call him Jackson."

"Oh, say,—Mr. Jackson!" sang out the Young Doctor.

"Whoa,—whoa,—whoa there!" came the response, as the driver pulled up his four horses.

The Bride and Groom—Adeliza and Dorsey—

had been given the seats of special favor in front and a shower of confetti at the start from the hotel, and now they looked around in some apprehension. They had not unnaturally taken the recent demonstration as a serenade in their honor and were doubtful as to what might come next.

The driver, a tall, broad-shouldered man who had impressed his passengers at the beginning as one capable of much endurance and worthy of much responsibility, looked around also at Franklin's call but with no sign of irritation or impatience.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"Do you object to our noise? Will it frighten your horses?"

"No, no. Go ahead. I'm a little afraid that you'll split your throats and spoil your voices but you don't alarm me in the least. Get on there, Beauty. Take hold and pull now, Duty. Geddap!"

"All right, then. Now, fellows, do your worst. 'Down, left, right, up, ready, *sing*'!"

Peggy took out a heavy veil and tied it over her ears, Marjorie caught up an extra sweater and tried to ward off the volume of sound that assaulted her from all sides, and Nan, in the back seat, held her tired head between her hands and laughed weakly.

But nothing so slight as lack of appreciation daunted the splendid courage of the four musicians. They strove heroically to produce harmony from four inharmonious mediums.

At one ear-splitting discord, Miss Harper permitted herself a fleeting look of annoyance and

amazement, but she glanced at Mrs. Bennett and withheld her protest. Then she followed her companion's mute example: she smiled serenely and waited for the storm to blow itself out,—which at this rate it surely must before long for sheer lack of power. And thereby the sedate chaperone proved herself once more "the good old sport" which Paul had once discovered her to be.

Ten miles from their starting point relief came both to the hard-working performers and the laughing, protesting victims. The driver drew up his horses beside a pretty stretch of forest and announced the nearness of "Apollinaris Spring."

" 'How dry I am!' " sang Paul, responding to the implied invitation at once and leaping to the ground.

"Oh, may we get out?" asked Peggy longingly.

"All out!" said the driver, smiling good-naturedly as the rest hastened to avail themselves of his permission.

"I don't want the mineral water," confessed Nan, shaking herself like a wet water spaniel, "but I'm ever so glad to be able to wiggle all over at once."

"We can drink in the piny fragrance of this forest, instead," suggested Marjorie, sniffing the air in deep contentment.

"Everybody must taste," insisted Richard Hunter. "This spring is guaranteed to make the roughest throat like velvet and to give back to the weary voice its pristine freshness."

"Don't drink any more, then," begged Nan of all the boys.

"Are we doomed to another recital like that of the last five miles?" groaned Peggy.

"We haven't begun to show you what we can do," declared Franklin Arnold as he assisted Miss Harper back to her place and turned to help Peggy. "We are just getting warmed up. Fellows, really we must put some speed into our orchestra. Our reputation is at stake."

"Dorsey, dear, please hand me my smelling salts," Adeliza was saying, as she and her husband climbed into the back seat, while Marjorie joined Peggy up in front.

Siren and horn, harmonica and bones were immediately brought into play again, but fortunately for the heads of the hearers, interruptions soon occurred of so unique an order that blatant noise and foolish bantering stopped of their own accord.

The first wonder that challenged and really chained their wandering attention was an abrupt cliff that rose sharply beside the winding roadway and glimmered darkly upon them. They had been passing numerous rocky formations of real geologic interest,—the Hoodoos of limestone, the Golden Gate of yellowish rhyolite, various outcroppings of basalt and sandstone,—but this sheer precipice was different. It really glimmered, its black face shone like a piece of gleaming anthracite coal, and the road beneath them showed traces of the same hard, shiny substance.

The driver had drawn up his horses silently and waited for his passengers to get their own first impressions. He watched them keenly—this Mr. Jackson. He was committed to them

and their safe keeping for the entire tour of the Park. He was much older than they and did not shrink from the responsibility,—but would he find his hands full, he wondered?

Mrs. Bennett looked up and caught the driver's gaze fastened earnestly upon the company. Something about his eyes—intent and interested—startled her suddenly, not with fear but surprise. Then she smiled. "He probably looks like some one I know," she said to herself. "I am always seeing resemblances."

Just then the Young Doctor,—who had jumped out, stamped on the black rock and tapped the shining cliff in an effort to discover its composition,—called out:

"Oh, Mr. Jackson, tell us what this rock is, will you? I give it up."

"The Indians used to find it pretty good stuff for arrowheads," the driver answered, as though he wished to keep them guessing.

"Not flint?" ventured Nan thoughtlessly.

"Not exactly," replied the driver, smiling. "No, this is natural volcanic *glass,*—obsidian, it's called."

"And did they blast this road out of it?" asked Price Huntington, joining Franklin in his examination of the cliff.

"They did not blast just here; the builder invented another method. He kindled fires that brought the glassy material to an intense heat and then dashed cold water upon it. The consequence was that the stuff broke up into pieces that could be carted off and a place for the road was made."

"Good work! This place and that remarkable viaduct of steel and concrete back in the Golden Gate strike me as being mighty interesting pieces of engineering," said Franklin, climbing back to his place.

"They're both wonderful in their way," said Paul, who was quite impressed.

"Very wonderful," said Dick as the coach started on.

"Wonderful, indeed," added Price, catching Dick's spirit.

"Wonderful and more wonderful," laughed the Young Doctor.

"Enjoying the joke?" asked Paul.

"It's as much on us as on you," said Price. "We're just discovering how few words we own that are of any use at all here. Everything is wonderful and marvelous,—and then marvelous and wonderful again,—and there our power of expression stops. You simply started the ball rolling this time."

"Well, somebody's got to be the goat," said Paul, smiling resignedly, "so it might as well be me."

"What kind of a noise does a goat make?" asked Dick, rattling his bones vigorously.

"A noise like this," responded Paul, blowing a lusty blast on his horn.

"No, like this," cried Price and Franklin, joining the musical chorus with energy.

"You'll scare the beavers away," said the driver when he could be heard. "This is Beaver Lake below us. See, the beavers made it themselves by building that snaky-looking dam clear

across the valley. And by the way," he added, catching a glimpse of Miss Harper's resigned countenance, "we are liable to see a good many wild animals roaming around from here on,—if we aren't too noisy. Sometimes the deer, for instance, and occasionally even the bears come near enough to the coaches for snap-shots."

"Away with the whistles," cried the Young Doctor, seizing the siren and the tin horn and flinging them over the cliff toward Beaver Lake. "Pocket your bones, Hunter, and I'll retire my harmonica. Get your kodaks ready, everybody. A prize to the one who sees a wild animal first!"

"What will the prize be?" asked the driver, amused at the success of his stratagem.

"Er—well—oh, I know. A letter puzzle! This famous letter puzzle!" he cried, bringing out a little advertising affair from his pocket. "The trick is to make these letters spell 'Perkins' Plasters'—and it is some trick," he added solemnly.

"Oh, let me try it," cried the Bride girlishly. "Dorsey and I love to do puzzles."

Gravely Franklin handed the little nickel letter frame to her and "silence reigned in the Bridal Pew," as Paul whispered to Dick who shared the back seat with the couple.

A chunky, furry body ran across the road just then and the driver called Marjorie's attention to it with a motion of his whip.

"There's an animal! I've won!" she cried excitedly. "Oh, see it run! There, it went right under a rock! Did you see it? Did you?"

"What was it? A bear?" squealed Nan, jumping up in nervous excitement.

"A woodchuck, Miss," whispered the driver as Marjorie looked up at him for help.

"A woodchuck," she repeated firmly. "Don't you all know a *woodchuck* when you see one?" she added, laughing.

"We didn't see it," replied Paul, on the defensive. "You have the advantage, up there in front. It's unfair, absolutely unjust, and you don't deserve the prize!"

"I'm up here, too, but I didn't see it," said Peggy, knowing how Marjorie had come by her wisdom.

"Marjorie, tell me this," called Nan, taking a sudden interest: "'How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?'"

"Say that again, Nan, do," begged Marjorie, laughing outright and turning around to look at Nan. "I'm sure that has not reached England yet. At least, I have never heard it, though I suppose it is old to all of you."

"Perhaps this one is new to them," suggested the driver with a twinkle in his eye: "If a brown bear bore on her fur-bearing back more fur than a fur-bearing black bear bore, how much more fur would the black bear bear if the black bear bore on her fur-bearing black fur back as much black fur as the fur-bearing brown bear bears on her fur-bearing brown fur back?"

Wide-eyed silence greeted this astonishing parody of familiar phrases but when the driver ended and turned back to his duties with a short,

"Geddap, Beauty! Come on now, Duty!" a shout arose:

"What's the matter with Mis-ter Jackson? He's all right! Who's all right? Jackson!"

The driver smiled as though pleased, pulled his broad hat farther down over his eyes and clucked again to his horses.

"Paul, is your camera ready?" Peggy turned about to ask, a mile or two beyond this point. Her watching eyes had caught a slight movement in the trees not far in advance of the stagecoach.

An instant later the driver pulled in his horses with a quiet warning, "Watch now!"

"Be ready, Paul," Peggy passed the word along.

A group of tall bushes at the edge of the forest shook slightly and parted and a deer stepped out upon the road fearlessly and proudly. He turned an inquiring glance on the waiting coach and passengers, curved his graceful neck and looked back at the quiet foliage that had hidden him. The bushes swayed again and a soft-eyed doe stole quietly to his side, followed by a thin-legged, spotted fawn.

"Paul!" breathed Peggy, turning about slowly.

"Click!" replied Paul's kodak promptly.

The little sound carried to the sensitive ears of the deer and they wheeled quickly, trotted down the road and vanished again among the sheltering trees.

"I'm ready to go home any time," announced Nan, sitting back at length and drawing a long breath. "That sight was worth this whole——"

"Look!" cried the driver, turning around sud-

denly and pointing with his whip to a lake that lay at their right.

"What? What?" cried the others.

"Tell me, *is* it a bear this time?" asked Nan, starting up nervously.

"It is a huge elk," said Richard wonderingly, as two massive, branching horns showed above the blue waters and a pair of sturdy shoulders rose and fell with the powerful strokes of the nearly submerged animal.

Not another word was spoken as the group watched breathlessly the great head as it moved on and on steadily and then rose higher and finally emerged on the farther shore of the lake.

"Isn't that a wonderful sight!" breathed Marjorie.

"You are certainly in luck," ejaculated the driver as they started on. "I've never had a finer view of an elk about here myself."

"Have you been here long, Mr. Jackson?" inquired Mrs. Bennett, stirred again by some vague memory that the man's voice and appearance awakened.

"Not long as some men count time," was the rather odd reply.

The driver's long mustache did not quite conceal the smile that hovered for a moment on his lips. Mrs. Bennett caught his whimsical expression and wondered at it.

"He hasn't always been a driver and he likes being a mystery," she said to herself,—and then marveled at her own deductions. "What is there about him that interests me?" she wondered musingly. "His expression is so respon-

sive to our moods; it seems odd that he should take such interest in a party. My instinct is to trust him, too,—but I don't know just why."

At that moment Nan was asking apprehensively: "Mr. Jackson, please tell me if there is really any danger from the bears here. I am seeing one in every shadow."

"Miss Cummings didn't sleep well last night," explained Peggy as the driver looked around in some surprise. "She kept dreaming of hot springs and dangers all night."

"I will tell you the truth, Miss, and you can rest easy," Mr. Jackson answered, keeping one eye on his horses. "We are likely to see bears most anywhere, especially near the hotels where they come to the garbage heaps. But I've never known anybody to be hurt who kept his proper distance,—and I'm sure you will do that."

"At *least* that," answered Nan so promptly that they all laughed.

"No more exploring alone in Devils' Kitchens, then, eh, Nan?" remarked Dick, venturing for the first time to refer to Nan's experience of the day before.

"Never once," Nan replied, smiling directly at him at last. And Richard, forgiven for his overzealous care of her, drew a long breath of relief.

Everybody knew Richard's secret,—even Nan suspected it!—for it permeated him like a love potion administered by a witch, and revealed itself each time that he looked at her.

But everybody did not know Nan's secret. She seemed determined to punish Richard for each act of devotion, but how much of her harsh-

ness was assumed no one could tell, least of all Richard himself.

Mrs. Bennett wondered sometimes at her nephew's infatuation, he seemed so different from the cheery, hearty, careless youth she had always known. His infectious laugh rang out still,—but less frequently; his boyish jokes snapped out at the opportune moment,—but not often. He spoke seriously now of time and money and home and business. She knew that he was in the hands of the little blind god and so kept her own off Nan when they longed to shake her for her provoking actions.

In one way, however, Richard Hunter was unchanged. His unfailing courtesy was a characteristic which his present state of mind merely emphasized; and where it could not manifest itself in attentions toward Nan, it overflowed in kindness toward the other girls,—and therein, unconsciously, it served him better than he knew.

It was at Norris Geyser Basin, where they stopped for lunch on this first day's drive, that Fate began to take an active hand in the affairs of Richard and Nan.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATE TAKES A HAND.

"I never realized before that a two-foot plank was so narrow," confessed Peggy Bennett.

Price Huntington had just confided to her the appalling fact that beneath the board walk on which they were crossing the Norris Geyser Basin the earth's crust was thinner than in any other spot known to man.

"*How* thin is it?" demanded Nan Cummings, as he turned back and repeated the statement to her.

"Not more than three inches, I believe," was the answer.

"And what's under it?"

"The Devil and all his apparatus, for all we know."

"Mercy! I feel as though I were walking a tight rope over a chasm," Nan gasped. "I'll fall off and be parboiled, I know I will. I did things like that in my dreams last night. I burned up all but my nose, and I felt terribly unsubstantial with nothing else left of me."

"I dreamed when I was a child that a railroad train ran clear through me," Peggy called back to her. "But it was very considerate. It left no damage besides a small hole in one sleeve of my blue sailor suit."

"You yourself must have been a pretty small whole about that time," joked Price, looking down at her, amused.

"But I've grown a whole lot since then," Peggy assured him over her shoulder, failing, however, to look as dignified as she imagined herself to be.

She had donned that morning a simple crash dress as inconspicuous and suitable as her mother's soft pongee, and with it she wore a boyish-looking round linen hat, turned up in front and down behind, or *vice versa,* as the sun in his course determined.

"You look about fifteen," teased Price.

Peggy ventured no reply. She still walked the safe and narrow way which seemed even less safe and more narrow as she thought about it.

"Isn't this place uncanny?" Miss Harper was saying to Richard Hunter about that time.

He had gallantly offered to walk directly behind her until their exceptionally close proximity to very hot regions was past.

"I can actually *taste* sulphur, the odor is so strong," she added, wrinkling up her nose, which was one of her most "refined features," according to Paul.

"There is something around here to appeal to each sense, I verily believe," rejoined Richard, looking off over the weird, smoking, steaming landscape. "We certainly taste as well as smell sulphur, as you have said. Then we *hear* the sounds of bubbling water and escaping steam, we *see* all sorts of remarkable colorings, and we

may *feel* if we will several new sensations." Richard stopped and laughed. "Yesterday I yielded to the temptation to test the sense of touch. At Mammoth Hot Springs I moistened my finger and dipped it into Orange Geyser. Believe me, I found it quite as hot as the infernal regions are reputed to be!"

While Richard had been talking so intently, he had also been raising his voice unconsciously to a higher and higher pitch, and at the end, with a sense of annoyance, he realized that he was shouting in an effort to make himself heard above some opposing force.

He and Miss Harper had fallen behind the others a little, so he grasped her arm, helped her pick her way over the muddy ground at the end of the plank walk, and hurried her toward the place of thunder.

A warm, damp mist blew into their faces as they approached the vast steam vent that was responsible for the noise, the clouds of hot vapor, the wet ground and the barren trees that showed stark and unlovely for some distance in every direction.

"What do they call this exhibit?" yelled Dick in Peggy's ear as he discovered her near the opening.

"The Growler!" she screamed.

"What?"

"The Growler!" She shrieked the name at the top of her lungs.

Dick shook his head and curved his hand behind his ear the better to hear. But Peggy shook *her* head, also, and clasped her throat with

both hands. She refused to compete longer with a roar like that of many express trains.

So with the rest of the crowd they stood and looked and occasionally attempted to shout at one another, but finally retired, beaten,—the monster had no idea of ceasing his eternal cry and they had no way of pacifying him.

When they were able to make themselves heard, everybody began to talk at once, excitedly declaring their impressions of the noisy guardian of these infernal possessions. Richard threw back his head and laughed in his old hearty way.

"Aunt Evelyn," he called to Mrs. Bennett, "this old watchdog with his tremendous bark has done what the doctor in Great-grandmother's song failed to do. Do you remember:

> "' 'Tis beyond the art of man,
> Let him do the best he can,
> To make a scolding woman
> Hold her tongue, tongue, tongue.' "

"I'll make a note of that," exclaimed Young Doctor Arnold, pulling out billbook, paper and pencil. " 'For nervous exhaustion: place a steam vent in the same room with the patient at the approach of conversational symptoms. Tested and proved: Yellowstone Park, July——' "

Franklin looked up with a twinkle in his eye as he put the book away. "It reminds me of the leddy whose physician had prescribed rest, *much* rest for her nervous malady. She seemed in-

clined to argue the case with him when he said suddenly and most professionally: 'Madam, let me see your tongue. . . . Ah, it is as I thought. That needs a rest, too!' . . . Pardon me," and the Young Doctor ran up the hill, laughing.

Richard hurried off at the same moment.

"Je-rusalem!" he was exclaiming to himself as he followed the crowd and overtook Marjorie.

"It has just occurred to me," he said as he reached her, "that I forgot to relieve you of my dust coat when we reached Norris. My appetite for lunch exceeded my politeness, I'm afraid. You haven't the coat with you now, I see." Richard was anxious, but he tried not to betray his anxiety.

"Why, no, I left it on the back of the seat when we got out of the coach," she answered. "I am very grateful for the use of it, Mr. Hunter. I really was chilly the first part of the drive, though it is hard to believe it now in this hot place. Did I do wrong to leave it in the coach?" she added, catching the worried expression that crossed his face.

"No, no," he hastened to assure her. "You did just right. It is entirely my fault. To tell the truth," he continued, lowering his voice to a confidential murmur, "I am guilty of a piece of unbelievable carelessness. I cashed a check for a hundred dollars yesterday and tucked the bills into the inside pocket of my dust coat. Then I clean forgot the whole matter. This morning I flung my coat over my arm when we got into the coach but I didn't need it, so it was lying around loose until I put it around you."

"Oh, Mr. Hunter, I hope the money isn't *lost,*" cried Marjorie. "I shall blame myself if you don't find it,—even if I didn't know I was wearing so valuable a garment."

"The garment itself *is* valuable, though you might not suspect it," replied Richard, jocosely, willing to lighten the tension of the moment. "Long association has made it dear. Each mended pocket and darned sleeve is a memento of some thrilling adventure. Hello, what's up?" he exclaimed, hearing a shout ahead. "Let's investigate."

And together the two stragglers rejoined the chatting group.

"Come on, folks," Paul was calling from his place in the lead with a guide. "Up here is the Devil's Bath Tub. It's almost time for him to bathe, too, they say."

"Goodness, I don't want to *see* him," cried Nan Cummings, drawing back.

"Don't worry, you won't. He takes good care to remain invisible throughout the performance," some one said.

As they approached the rock-lined cavity that serves as His Majesty's tub, they heard the last few quarts of water gurgle out. They stood close to the edge and looked in. No water was visible, now. All was quiet and most harmless in appearance.

"But wait," they were told, "the Devil takes his bath every twenty minutes. Evidently we have just missed him."

So the visitors wandered about looking at the heaving, boiling clay in the Devil's Paint Pots

and discovering other new and strange evidences of heated internal fussings.

Richard ran ahead to the roadway to see if the coaches might be approaching, but returned to report, "Nothing doing," to Marjorie and to confide to her again what a careless donkey he had been. Franklin Arnold made several vain attempts to recover Marjorie's interest and Nan wandered near her tentatively, but nothing could distract her attention from Richard and his loss until she could be assured that the loss was not permanent.

Finally Paul's whistle recalled them all to the "tub." As they drew near, steam began to rise from the centre of the opening at the bottom; then water bubbled up from somewhere; then more and still more boiling water and clouds of steam; then with a rush the tub was full, was splashing over, was threatening to shower the observers as they ran in all directions to escape a wetting. And then, as though an unseen hand had pulled the stopper, the water began to recede, to run out,—till with a final chuckle the tub was empty again.

It was with something of the small boy's feeling when he says to the trickster, "Do it again," and adds to himself, "if y' *can,*" that the group lingered and saw this remarkable performance repeat itself without alteration or error.

"This Bath, being so publicly located," remarked Dick with suspicious soberness, "must be well known. I wonder if any one besides the energetic owner ever avails himself of the privileges offered here."

"The last gentleman who tried it," remarked the guide with equal seriousness, "failed to return for his outfit. The supposition is that he was drawn down below to the drying room and was pressed into Pluto's service. He tries to escape about every three hours, but only succeeds in attracting attention to his noisy sputtering. He's always in hot water, you see, and—There he blows now!"

A stream of boiling water shot up twenty-five feet into the air at no great distance from where they stood, and for fifteen minutes it steamed and spouted without cessation. Then the useless struggle ended, the geyser subsided and its dull crater became distinct once more.

"Is there really any truth——" began Marjorie Deming, and then stopped, flushing hotly and hoping that no one had overheard her.

Nan Cummings had, it seemed, for Nan came a step nearer and whispered in her ear, "I almost believed it, too."

And on her other side Franklin Arnold remarked seriously, "There was circumstantial evidence enough to prove the guide's story, but I notice that he hasn't lingered for a cross-examination. Let's see what he's discovered now."

It was a very busy little geyser before which the company had stopped. It spouted and rested, spouted and rested, spouted and rested like a breathless busybody who tells a story, waits a moment or two for it to take effect, and starts in on another exciting bit of gossip before her listeners have had time to recover from the first.

"He says it is the Minute Man," Paul ex-

plained. Then he turned back to the geyser. "Fire away there, old fellow! Fizz, pop, bang! I'm glad I haven't your job. It's too systematic to suit my lazy temperament. Still, if I could turn out drawings and gather in the cold copper with that regularity—h'm—I'd soon see *la belle Italie,* the dear land of m' birth!"

Paul ran after the rest of his party and caught them just as they were climbing into the coach, which had driven around by the road to meet them and take them over the twenty miles remaining of their first day's drive.

Nan was standing by the back of the stage, looking rather forlorn.

Price had jumped up beside Peggy on the front seat, Franklin had sprung in with Mrs. Bennett and Miss Harper after waiting vainly for Marjorie to look his way again, the Misfits in the back seat were bending over the absurd letter puzzle, to which the Bride still clung after hours of unsuccessful effort to spell "Perkins' Plasters," and Paul, who had promised them to try his hand at it, paused beside them ready to mount the step.

"The second seat for yours, Nan," said Paul, giving her a friendly boost and then jumping in beside "Dorsey dear." "Who's missing? Oh —where's Dick? And Marjorie?"

Nan knew well enough, but "Where are they?" she added to Paul's inquiry.

Richard and Marjorie were standing at a little distance from the coach, talking earnestly. Their heads were bent over some object that Dick seemed to be turning over rapidly in his

hands. As the passengers in the coach watched, he threw up his head and laughed, thrust a little package into the inside pocket of his coat and turned toward the stage.

"All aboard?" he called gaily. "Come on, Miss Marjorie. We mustn't hold up this tour."

The girl laughed up at him happily and they climbed together into the seat where Nan was sitting in a somewhat surprised silence.

"I'm *so* pleased that you found everything all right," she heard Marjorie say as Dick settled himself between them.

"I'm rather tickled myself," Richard replied, exuberant in his relief at recovering his hundred dollars. "Our driver is all right, all right. Looked after my property as carefully as if it had been his own.—Say, this is a great trip, isn't it? I'm just beginning to realize how much I'm enjoying it. Having a good time, Nan?"

"Fine," she replied without enthusiasm. "May I look at your map, Mr. Hunter?"

"Couldn't you drop the 'Mister'?" he asked softly as he passed an illustrated folder to her.

She gave him a swift glance that seemed freighted with meaning, and he said to himself, "What the dickens have I done now?"

Then he gave it up and turned to Marjorie, conversing jovially with her, while Nan sulked over the folder and Fate chuckled gleefully, unheard by any one.

CHAPTER XVII.

"AMERICA, I LOVE YOU!"

Late that afternoon Coach 118 in its turn discharged a party of weary tourists at the Fountain Hotel, forty miles distant from Mammoth Hot Springs, their starting point that morning. They had seen so much, experienced so much, smelled and tasted and heard so much of the unusual and unique, that they felt satiated for the time being and glad to go their separate ways and dine in quiet.

But after rest and food had once more fulfilled their blessed mission, the travelers were as keen as ever to see what was new and interesting in this Firehole Geyser region. Bears and geysers were under discussion as they left the dining room.

"I've already seen one bear," declared Peggy triumphantly. "I looked out of the hall window upstairs when we first arrived and there was a great black bear lumbering down the path to the kitchen door *exactly* like Grumpy in the story."

"But they say this is the best hour to see the bears feast, back by the garbage pile," suggested Price Huntington. "Who wants to go?"

"All of us," replied Marjorie promptly.

"Are you sure it will be safe?" asked Nan

Cummings, turning appealing black eyes toward Price.

"I'll protect you with my life," he answered extravagantly. "You can play little girl and hold my hand until we're safely back. Come, Miss Peggy, you may have the other hand."

Peggy seized it gaily and the three were off, racing toward a goal of tomato cans and refuse, while the rest of the party followed more slowly.

Richard strolled along rather morosely beside Mrs. Bennett, not dreaming that she read his mind perfectly and saw the havoc that Nan's inconstancy was working there. Miss Harper had remained at the hotel, preferring a comfortable chair to an uncertain bear, but Marjorie, who had come with the rest, was now plainly the happiest of them all. Her feet danced gaily over the rough ground, her cheeks flushed and paled as she chatted and her eyes glowed as she lifted them now and again to meet the glowing eyes of her companion.

And he? Franklin Arnold, M.D.? Oh, he was superlatively happy, too. He was many miles from Back Bay hospitals, North End kiddies, and Doc Smith's projected home, and it made no difference to him whether bears or buffaloes, geysers or geese were their destination. He himself was walking on a delightful path flooded with golden light. The girl of his dreams had materialized and she was with him,—and nothing else mattered.

In fact, Frank and Marjorie lingered so long by the way that they met the others returning with stories of two bears and a cub before they

had seen as much as a single tomato can for themselves. But nothing loth, they turned about —and followed the crowd to the geyser basin.

There the beauty of the early evening became a part of their own rosy experience, and they both declared they should *never* forget it. History proves that they never did,—and indeed the splendor and the glory of the sunset they saw was worthy to be recorded in any one's history. In fact, it did go down in Peggy's diary that very night, for she returned to the hotel full of "inspiration." This is what she wrote:

We saw a *wonderful sunset* while waiting for the Fountain Geyser to play. Opalescent tints in the wide, shallow basin reflected the more brilliant pink and blue of the sky. The distant mountains were deep blue, Mt. Holmes and other snow-capped peaks, *violet*. The colors faded very slowly while the steam increased in the open pool of the Fountain Geyser and twenty smaller hot springs and geysers steamed and bubbled and spurted. The Fountain increased in steam and spurts for half an hour or so. Finally it began to play in earnest, the main volume shooting twenty feet into the air with occasional jets fifty or sixty feet high. It gave a very *broad* effect, the steam spreading low to the right as well as so high it mingled with the clouds.

We waited until once more the geyser was subdued and the Clepsydra's roaring developed into a hissing volume of steam, and then picked our way across the thin, crusty formation to the Hotel Fountain again.

Peggy had had ample opportunity for her own impressions and reflections at the geyser basin. For the first time that day she and her mother

and Paul had been alone to enjoy the wonders of the strange region. Quietly they had walked about and exchanged their comments of interest, too absorbed to notice the little human problems that were developing around them.

Richard had watched the display in gloomy solitude. As its sparkle and flash and flare had suited Nan's naughty mood—for she still clung to Price in a childish appeal for protection in this land of bears and bugaboos,—so its sombre threatenings and rumblings and mysterious grumblings seemed in sympathy with his heart and gloomy thoughts.

"What a fool I am!" he told himself frankly at last, taking a long breath and a long look around. "I declare I was getting almost blue. Well, well! Now there's Miss Harper coming out all by herself to have a look at the geyser. She looks lonely, too. What are we all thinking of to neglect her?"

And Richard summoned up a cheerful smile and, just to prove what he could do, gave Miss Harper an evening of such good fellowship that she was surprised into being very companionable and friendly herself.

Meanwhile Nan's mood had changed. Now that Richard was no longer watching her, her gaiety dropped from her like a withered petal from a rose. She answered Price's good-humored sallies with indifferent monosyllables and his serious remarks with petulant nothings, until, surprised, he asked if she were tired and wished to go in. She was and she did, she assured him, and they walked silently back to the

hotel. Arrived there, she astonished him further by laughing and chatting with Paul for an hour on the verandah, and finally, after Richard had returned with Miss Harper, walking indoors with her arm thrown affectionately around the English chaperone's waist!

Then Price suddenly realized that Nan had led him about like a nicely-trained bear all the evening,—and he hadn't even spoken to Peggy Bennett for hours. He walked back and forth thinking about it half in amusement, half in chagrin, and bumped unceremoniously into Richard Hunter, glowering at nothing from a corner of the hotel. Then they paced the length of the piazza together, talking wisely of craters and cones, paint pots and hot springs until they discovered Frank Arnold all by himself, apparently talking to the stars.

Price and Dick looked at each other and laughed softly, but understanding the situation, they retreated in good order and left the Young Doctor to his dreams.

Within the hotel, Peggy was earnestly writing in her diary her description of the Fountain Geyser. Nan had dressed for bed hastily, flinging her clothes into a despised heap, and now lay with her black head buried in the pillow and the covers drawn up to her ears. Mrs. Bennett, on her own couch in another part of the big room, was sound asleep.

In an adjoining apartment where Miss Harper, too, was lost to all earthly interests, Marjorie Deming was facing herself in the mirror. Her eyes shone like twin stars, her cheeks

bloomed pink as Killarney roses and her lips smiled tremulously. She was not looking at her own face. She was not conscious that it was Marjorie Deming's eyes that smiled back at her. She was only seeing the girl who had been so happy all day long,—a girl not quite familiar to her,—a girl whose outlook seemed changed since she had known a Young Doctor from Boston—"Massachusetts," and that was less than two days.

She caught the glimmer of the little gold locket that she always wore and opened it as usual to say good-night to the faces there.

"Oh, Father Deming," she whispered, looking at the big blond head and the merry blue eyes that seemed so dear even in a tiny, tinted picture, "*how* I wish you were here! How you would enjoy everything! Mother would not like it as you would,—the noises and the odors and the queer, queer experiences,—but you would like them, yes, and the dear, dear people. You would *love* the people!"

Then suddenly Marjorie turned off the light as though she could not bear its searching glare any longer, and crept to the window. Overhead the stars shone brilliantly and the moon fitfully, as a few vagrant clouds swept over its face now and then. The strange, unfamiliar landscape showed dimly. At length the odor of sulphur, wafted to her by a passing breeze, stung Marjorie's nostrils. The distant sound of hissing steam and spurting water drifted to her ears.

"Dear, strange, beautiful, *wonderful* America," sighed Marjorie softly, "I love you!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALONG THE FIREHOLE.

Although five of Driver Jackson's eleven passengers had gone to sleep at the Fountain Hotel in several states of unreasoning emotion, all of them bore serenely expectant faces as they stood waiting for his stage soon after eight o'clock the next morning.

A close observer might have noted that Richard Hunter placed himself directly behind Nan in the line of tourists with the evident determination to secure a seat near her in the coach. But Richard was not counting on the "kind hand of Fate" which had insisted on mixing up his affairs.

He had said to himself, "The front seat and the driver for ours, this morning," and he proceeded to assist Nan to that elevated position as soon as the coach was called. But when his own foot was on the hub of the wheel and he was about to follow her, Mrs. Bennett touched his arm and said in a low tone, "Dick, I heard Miss Harper say she would like to ride in front today."

Dick's good nature threatened for a moment to desert him at this unexpected cog in the smooth-running machinery of his latest plan.

He hesitated, looked up at Nan—the unattainable—and turned away, but not before Mrs. Bennett had caught the disappointment of his face and the drift of his thought.

She, too, glanced up and—regretted. Poor, chivalrous Dick! Why had she appealed to him? And now it was too late to withdraw her suggestion; the other seats were being filled and Miss Harper was waiting. Then she smiled, for the sudden change in Nan's face was ludicrous.

Nan had risen that morning a little chastened in spirit and a little inclined to be kind. Now she looked down in incredulous amazement as her eager cavalier fell back and assisted Marjorie's chaperone to the desirable front seat.

"What! Had Dick *chosen* to sit somewhere else when a place awaited him beside her?" her expression said.

"Poor Nan," Mrs. Bennett thought with compassion, as Dick silently helped his aunt into the back seat and climbed to the only other vacancy left. "I can't condemn her utterly for she hasn't discovered yet just what is the matter with her. Of course I know her nature. The desire is instinctive to hurt the heart that loves her, to hurt and hurt it, to turn the weapon in the wound,—just to prove her power. She's following her instinct unreasoningly and is jealous and unfair as she was toward Peggy. It is Dick's problem, however," she mused, sighing and smiling, "but, oh, may I be near when he takes a master hand in solving it!"

That time seemed far off, however, as the coach rolled along over the hard, level roads to-

ward a third geyser basin, and the company settled into a quiet enjoyment of the ride and each other, very different from the noisy experiences of their first day together.

On the horizon a great cloud of steam beckoned them on—"a pillar of cloud by day," Peggy called it, feeling a little like a follower of Moses in the wilderness but quite sure that she had come already to a wonderful land of promise. About four miles from the Fountain Hotel the coaches approached near enough to the heavy vapor to see the vast seething caldron that lay beneath it. Yet they could not at first comprehend its great size and marvelous characteristics.

It was located close by the brink of the Firehole River, which ran directly through the geyser basin, and water poured over its rim constantly into the stream.

"Mr. Jackson," called Mrs. Bennett, after a few moments of bewildered contemplation, "will you please explain this strange formation to us? It seems neither a geyser nor a hot spring but something more uncanny and terrible than either."

"It's a queer phenomena," commented Paul.

"Phenomenon," corrected Peggy absently.

"You are right, madam," the driver was saying to Mrs. Bennett, and they all turned to hear his explanation. "This big boiler—Excelsior—is not like any of the rest. It has no equal in all the Park for size and power. We call it a water volcano, and it's erupting all the time the same as you see it now."

"What a lot of good water is going to waste!" exclaimed Richard, watching the continual overflow of the boiling flood.

"Yes, it is said to pour four thousand gallons of water into the river each minute."

"Himmel!" muttered Paul.

"It is over three hundred feet long by two hundred wide, if you care for 'figgers,'" the driver continued, "and, let's see, twenty feet deep, I believe."

"Why, it's *stupendous,* isn't it?" cried Peggy, trying to grasp the arithmetical problem involved. "Do you mean it is *always* steaming and spilling over like this?"

"Always," was the answer. "Oh, well, there have been two exceptions when she played, just to prove she was a geyser. Then she shot a column into the air from fifty to two hundred feet in height. But she soon got over it, and she hasn't blown up since 'eighty-eight, they tell me."

"She's kept *her* temper pretty well under control," muttered Richard meaningly, but no one overheard him.

"Now you're going to see something pretty," said the driver, with the air of a garden lover about to exhibit a pet chrysanthemum or dahlia.

Then he took them to the margin of Prismatic Lake, threw out his hand with an eloquent gesture and listened proudly to their expressions of delighted surprise. They found the lake to be nearly as large as the vast crater they had just viewed, and like it, partly hidden by a steadily rising column of steam. But whenever the veil of vapor drifted aside and revealed the face of

the lake, it was of rainbow beauty in its rare coloring.

"It's a model of its kind," declared Paul with the supreme satisfaction of an artist who makes a discovery. "It is perfect in its setting. Do y' notice how the water is held in the great shallow bowl and just dribbles nice and easy down its sides? And will you see the fine *simple* lines of it? Tell you, Nature's great on composition!"

"One more," announced the driver, "and then we move on. This is called Turquoise Spring and no one dares to say which is more beautiful, this pool or Prismatic Lake."

"It is exquisite," said Marjorie.

"Lovely," agreed the Young Doctor, looking at Marjorie and forgetting the spring.

"Well, these three are called the marvels of the Midway Geyser Basin," remarked the driver, speaking to his horses and urging them on their way. "There are hundreds of other springs here, just as beautiful but not quite so famous."

"'Marvels of the Midway,'" repeated Price Huntington. "I've seen the 'Midway' at several expositions but never anything to approach this."

"There *is* nothing to approach it," declared Miss Harper suddenly with deep conviction.

The driver, on the same seat with her, heard her remark and laughed. "Wait till you see the Upper Basin," he said. "We'll soon be there."

"Get out your dictionaries and look up a fresh supply of words," Nan called back to the others. "Mr. Jackson seems to think we'll need 'em."

They needed them very soon, for after passing other geysers and springs without pausing, they

stopped not far from the rim of a particularly lovely example of the quiet, transparent, beautifully colored pool. In shape and hue it had evidently reminded its discoverer of the deep-centred, richly tinted blossom that, climbing the vine beside the porch at home, had smiled a greeting to each new day. For the pool bore the name of the Morning Glory and its visitors silently applauded the happy choice.

A little later two other hot springs of equal beauty lay before them: the Punch Bowl, unique and beautiful in form and lovely in tints of yellow and green, and the Emerald Pool, a still sheet of radiant water, green as the jewel whose name it had borrowed.

Then the driver began to urge his horses forward more rapidly and steadily, a sign that he was preparing for the usual spectacular arrival at another hotel.

"But, oh," protested Peggy, "you are taking us right by a lot of interesting formations!"

"Yes, Miss, but you'll walk out to visit these geysers this afternoon and if you're as lucky as some, you may see most of the fifteen big ones play within the space of a few hours. You're in the heart of the greatest geyser region in the world right now."

No one felt inclined to challenge this statement. As Paul parodied later:

"Geysers to the right of us,
Geysers to the left of us,
Geysers in front of us
Volleyed and thundered."

About two o'clock that afternoon Paul Bennett stepped softly out upon the rustic upper verandah of Old Faithful Inn. He chuckled as he looked about him. Each chair was occupied by a weary woman,—some younger, some older,—who had journeyed thither on one of the stage coaches in the day's long procession. Some were resting frankly with eyes closed. Some had drawn their chairs close to the log railing and were looking out over the great steaming, spouting field of geysers, with Old Faithful keeping up its reputation for clock-like regularity only a few feet away.

Nan was munching candy and gazing moodily at the queer landscape. Marjorie and Peggy were busily writing in little red and black leather note books, with frequent pauses to watch the play of steam from the various vents before them.

"Where's Mother?" asked Paul of his sister.

"Lying down in our room," Peggy replied. "Her eyes felt tired and strained, she said."

"Then rest is what she needs. Some of us boys are going for a walk. Want to come?"

"I couldn't be *hired* to walk even a quarter of a mile," declared Peggy. "For some reason I feel frightfully tired this afternoon."

"And you?"

"I'll stay with Peggy, thank you," Marjorie replied briefly,—and Nan nodded in silent acquiescence.

"You boys will enjoy going off alone for a change," added Peggy. "You must be tired helping us in and out of the coach——"

"To say nothing of suppressing your exuberant spirits all the morning," supplemented Marjorie, smiling.

"We'll let off steam now, never fear," Paul replied.

"Well, this is just the place to do it,—but don't be a Growler," laughed Peggy as he left them. "Have you kept your note book up to date, Marjorie?" she added, turning again to her diary.

"I have to confess that I have not," the young English girl admitted. "It is hard to feel in the mood for writing in the midst of so much excitement, and even harder to find words to fit the sights we see."

"I find it so, too," agreed Peggy. Yet this is what she was writing:

JULY 21, 19—.

This morning we left Fountain Hotel promptly and had a quiet, beautiful drive along the Firehole River. The name *Firehole* interested me and I found out that in the depths of a black spring of that name appears a light blue flame that flickers up and goes out constantly,—caused by an air current through a fissure in the rocks, they say.

A few miles along the river we came to a wonderful collection of brilliantly colored pools of which the Prismatic, a rainbow-tinted lake, and Turquoise Spring were most beautiful.

We also saw two very odd pools. Into one at our driver's suggestion, Cousin Dick threw his big white handkerchief. It was sucked down out of sight by the swirling waters and Dick said, "Good-night!" never expecting to see it again. But in about a minute up it came on the

other side of the pool. The driver fished it out with a stick, waved it about it in the air until it dried and returned it to Dick with the compliments of the Laundry.

Then he told us that once upon a time (which is a good way for fairy stories to begin!) a Chinaman thought he would utilize a small geyser nearby to do his washing. So he erected a tent just over the boiling water and had everything at hand to begin business. Then, not knowing the nature of the place, he dropped a cake of soap into it. The geyser erupted so quickly that his tent and everything in it was blown away, and the mouth of the crater was shattered and enlarged by the sudden blow-up. Strangely enough, Mr. Jackson added, nothing appears to have been seen of the Chinaman since!

The story aroused my curiosity, anyway, and I wondered if it were really possible to make a geyser spout by dropping something into it. I found this statement in a book in the Inn: Anything which impedes the circulation of water in the geyser tube will expedite the eruption. . . . The addition of soap or lye makes the water of the geyser tube less free to circulate, and thus hastens the conditions necessary to an eruption. The apparently contrary process of violently agitating the water of the geyser, as by stirring it with a stick, sometimes produces the same effect; but this results from the sudden forcing upward of masses of superheated water instead of allowing them to rise and gradually cool. (They say that the Surprise Geyser near the Great Fountain will spout if any one tosses a handful of dirt into it!)

Sometime I am going to copy the "geyser theory" into my book and study it at my leisure. At present I am simply filled with amazement at the number, the height and the heat of the geysers. They are surely the greatest mysteries in the world. Nearly all of them play regu-

larly enough to be scheduled like so many trains on a time table.

We arrived here this morning just in time to see Old Faithful spout at 11.15,—and she's repeated her exhibition twice since at about seventy-minute intervals. First we hear a deep growl of warning from her rocky throat. Next she throws up low jets of water, and then she lifts a great column over one hundred and twenty-five feet high straight up toward the clouds and *holds* it there splashing and steaming for three minutes before it sinks gradually into the earth, and she takes another brief rest. The display is beyond all expectation and imagination, and seems equally wonderful each time it is repeated. Old Faithful is called the most perfect as well as the most regular and famous geyser in the Park.

We can see from here a dozen or more spurts of steam rising from different parts of the basin,—some small vents and some more or less important geysers.

The greatest of them all is the Giant, whose cone we can see steaming slightly even now. But the Giant plays only at intervals of from seven to twelve days; and although she is overdue, we have no encouragement to——"

Peggy looked up as Old Faithful began to play again and then caught a glimpse of a new stream of water in the distance, shooting up higher than any other visible in the geyser bed.

"Look, Marjorie!" she cried. "Nan, look! Do you suppose that can be——"

A hotel attendant stepped out upon the verandah and she stopped to listen to his announcement.

"The Castle Geyser has just begun to play. Rises seventy-five feet, plays thirty minutes usu-

ally once a day. Distance from here about one mile. Has the most imposing crater to be seen in the Park."

Peggy listened carefully but thoughtfully, and then beckoned to Young Buttons as he ended.

"Are you *sure* that isn't the Giant?" she asked. "It looks higher than seventy-five feet and it is playing just where the Giant is located according to my map."

The boy sent a startled glance out across the plain. Then he darted back into the hotel with a muttered, "Excuse me!" A moment later he sprang out on the verandah again and his voice rang out like a trumpet:

"The *Giant Geyser* has just begun to play. Rises two hundred and fifty feet into the air. Plays ninety minutes. Distance from here one and one-half miles. You will have ample time to walk or drive to it. It has not played for *fourteen days!*"

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE GEYSER ZONE.

Peggy sprang up excitedly before the boy had completed his announcement. That the Giant Geyser, the greatest in the Park, had elected to play on their one afternoon in the Upper Basin was news almost too good to be true. It made of the visit a real event and took precedence over all lesser interests at once.

"Come on, Marjorie and Nan," Peggy cried, forgetful alike of her recent declaration of weariness and her good intentions toward her note book. "We mustn't miss this. I won't disturb Mother or Miss Harper. They are tired, and we'll be right in sight of the hotel all the time, anyway. Get your cameras, girls."

A moment more and the three girls were hurrying toward the spouting geysers, their footsteps making a hollow sound on the thin crust. They passed numerous small geysers and hot springs, but did not pause, intent to reach the Giant while his power was still in its zenith.

Other groups of visitors came, hastening from different directions, all drawn by the wonderful spectacle, and Peggy was not surprised when Paul appeared at her elbow with Price and Dick at his heels.

Franklin had volunteered to go back to the Inn to notify the ladies of the party lest they miss the display, Paul explained, but he would doubtless join them soon.

"Where's Mother?" he asked as usual. "Isn't she with you?"

"She was resting and I didn't call her," replied Peggy, already regretting her decision. "Perhaps I should have told her about it, at least."

"Don't worry. Frank will come back like a sandwich man with a chaperone on each arm, see if he doesn't," Paul replied. "Let's get nearer. We must try for a good picture of this, Peggy."

Peggy longed for a larger camera to do justice to the great geyser as she pointed their little kodak at the broad, towering fountain. For while the Giant was indeed a cone geyser, rising from a crater that resembled a huge, broken horn, yet its volume was so great that at a slight distance it seemed a splendid example of the fountain variety.

As they watched the display, marveling at the way the rising steam mingled with the gathering clouds and so increased the illusion that the cone flung its scalding contents up to touch the sky, the beating of horses' hoofs came to their ears. They looked up to see Frank Arnold and the young bridegroom, Dorsey Dillon, approaching them on horseback.

"Where's Adeliza?" whispered Nan to Paul, surprised to see "Dorsey dear" without his Blonde Bride.

"These walks are hard on her pumps and the atmosphere on her complexion, I guess," an-

swered Paul lightly. "And she doesn't look like an equestrienne."

The riders jumped lightly to the ground and Frank explained that as the two older women—he did not refer to the Bride!—had preferred to remain at the Inn, he had secured a couple of horses and invited Mr. Dillon to come with him to overtake them.

"The horse I am riding happens to wear a side saddle," Mr. Dillon said, his face, like Franklin's, as guileless as a young cherub's. "Do any of you young ladies chance to ride?"

"Marjorie does," said Peggy promptly.

"Then perhaps she will consent to ride around with me a little," suggested the Young Doctor, turning courteously to Marjorie, quite as though he had not planned it all from the moment he had learned that she often rode at home in England.

"Why, thank you," hesitated Marjorie, looking longingly at the horse.

"It's all right, Marjo," said Peggy, patting her shoulder. "The rest of us couldn't ride if we would, because we don't know how, but we'll trot along on 'Shank's Mare' and keep you in sight."

At that, Marjorie gladly swung herself into the saddle, where she looked, as she felt, perfectly at home. She and Franklin moved off sedately in spite of the riotous joy that suddenly flooded their hearts, and several of those who watched caught their breath softly in the little silence that followed.

"Who'd like to be in his shoes?—Hush, don't

all speak at once!" quoth Paul, his hand on his heart.

"We know *you* would," laughed Peggy, glad the momentary tension was relaxed.

"Oh! *me?* I don't count," sighed Paul, and he began to whistle "My Little English Rose," improvising a depressing minor strain.

"Next thing you know, he'll erupt into tears and we'll have *another* geyser on our hands," said Dick solemnly. "I shall move to a safe distance at once."

"We'll have to leave the Giant soon anyway if we have time for further explorations," suggested Price, glancing at his watch.

"Let's follow the horses," said Peggy, "and stop along the way."

They came in sight of the Grotto Geyser before long and lingered to examine its peculiar cone. It was a huge stone affair of silica formation, self-made, doubtless, like all of the geyser craters but unique in that it had several deep, grotto-like openings through which the water poured when the geyser was in action. At this moment, however, all was quiet and the crater itself was quite dry.

"What a background for a picture!" cried Paul, climbing up on the rocky formation.

"Oooh! Is it safe?" cried Nan, taking instant alarm.

"Safe enough, unless some of the soldiers see him. You know the duties of the militia stationed here include not only the protection of the people but protection of the precious Park," said Richard.

"Well, isn't there really some danger of its erupting suddenly?"

"Not just now,—there's hardly a whiff of vapor about it. It's as dead as a door nail," Paul assured her. "Come on, let's have a picture, anyway."

"I'll take it," volunteered Dick.

So Price and Paul, Peggy and Nan grouped themselves hurriedly about the Grotto, and Dick snapped the picture.

"Now I'll take one, Dick, with you in it," cried Peggy, running down with the little camera to exchange places with him.

"Then hurry," said Paul suddenly, looking back into the crater.

The rest started up in alarm at his tone and Peggy clicked the kodak hastily.

"All right," she called. "Come quick!"

A little column of steam had begun to drift lazily upward from an aperture behind them, and Paul had caught a hissing, gurgling sound also at the time he spoke his word of warning. And now, scarcely had they left the cone, before a cloud of scalding hot steam gushed up fifteen or twenty feet high and boiling water splashed all over the rock where a moment before they had posed in apparent safety.

"There! We're lucky to escape!" cried Nan. "I knew it was risky."

"It was," admitted Price.

"But I'm glad we got the pictures," added Peggy, gazing with fresh wonder at the apparition before her. Where had that mass of water and steam been when they were sitting on the

crater? She shuddered and echoed Nan's brief prayer of thanksgiving in her heart.

"Talk about sitting on a keg of dynamite!" exclaimed Paul, to whom the geyser had seemed lifeless.

"Or about waiting for a clock-set bomb to explode!" added Price.

"Let's escape while we can!" cried Peggy in a thrilling whisper that made them all laugh.

"We've lost Mr. Dillon and the horses, too, but they went down toward the bridge," said Dick. "Maybe the Riverside Geyser is due to perform."

Paul pulled a geyser time table from his pocket.

"It's just about due," he said. "It plays every seven hours and the hotel boy said it went off last about an hour before we arrived. He called it the best of the bunch."

When they came to the river, the two horses stood on the further shore and beside them Frank and Marjorie waved gaily. "Dorsey dear," alone, was sitting on a rock not far from the slightly steaming crater of Riverside Geyser, but he rose and beckoned eagerly as he caught sight of them.

"I'm going over," cried Paul, starting at once. "He's found something, I guess."

When Paul joined young Mr. Dillon, the Bridegroom was watching with intense interest a garter snake about eighteen inches long. It was so deeply engaged in its attempt to swallow a small speckled trout that it paid no attention at all to their presence. The two watched for some

time the efforts of the little trout as it struggled to escape its captor, but the contest seemed about equal, neither side making any headway. At length young Dillon determined to take a hand, and with Paul's help secured the snake and released the fish. They put the trout back into the river, where, to their surprise, he flopped happily to find himself in his own element once more, and then swam away, seemingly unharmed by his experience in captivity.

"Good-bye, Jonah," called Paul.

Just then a shout attracted their attention and the two looked up to discover that the Riverside Geyser had begun to play and that they themselves were in a good position to be saturated with spray from it. They scampered back just in time, for with a final roar a wide sheet of water shot out obliquely over the river and sent a scalding mist over the spot where they had stood to watch "Jonah" swim away.

As the peculiarly beautiful geyser played above the blue water of the river, the sun shone suddenly from the midst of obscuring clouds. Instantly a murmur of delight arose among the spectators, for the living, moving fountain of water caught and held the brilliant sunbeams and a rainbow of exquisite beauty shone clear in the geyser's spray. Then the clouds closed in again and hung lower, and distant thunder began to rumble threateningly.

On the way back to Old Faithful Inn many of the other geysers of the first magnitude tempted the pedestrians to linger,—the Giantess, the Lion and Lioness, and lastly the Bee Hive. The Cas-

tle Geyser was now still, its period of playing being over long since, but its huge, picturesque cone was still hot and steaming and full of angry suggestion. Nevertheless, Peggy and Nan ventured to climb upon the crater and take hot pebbles from the very mouth of the geyser.

"Getting over your fear of eruptions?" asked Dick as Nan dropped the hot stone on the ground to let it cool a bit.

"Getting used to them, that's all," she answered. "By to-morrow I shan't even notice a geyser when I see one, they'll seem so common."

But that evening they had two visions of the lovely column of Old Faithful Geyser that made the familiar sight new and wonderful. The first was at sunset after a brief rain, when the vast stream of water seemed full of sparkling diamonds and trickling rainbows; and the second was later in the evening when the search-light on the top of the Inn was turned upon the spouting geyser and made it transplendent with all the spectrum colors.

The search-light discovered, also, two or three bears still at the garbage pile far back of the hotel and sent them scurrying off into the woods. And less amusing, perhaps, it revealed the whereabouts of strolling couples who were out ostensibly to get the latest views of the most charming of all geysers.

Finally as a perfect climax to a perfect day, the tourists gathered in the great, friendly living-room of the beautiful rustic Inn, and while some sat silent before the huge fireplaces with the big corn popper and watched the swinging pendulum

of the great clock, others gathered about the piano in the balcony and sang the best loved songs of north and south and east and west.

When sleep came at last, it was to the accompaniment of the geyser playing once more just outside the hotel; and at intervals all night those who were nearest heard the regular eruptions a little more than an hour apart, as one will hear the striking of a clock hour after hour throughout a wakeful night.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HOLD-UP.

COLONIAL HOTEL, YELLOWSTONE LAKE,
July 22, 19—.

DEAR COUSIN NELL:

I am so excited I couldn't sleep if I tried, so I'm just going to sit up and write you all about it. My mind is in a perfect whirl and I may jump into the middle of my story first,—but be patient. At any rate, we are *safe* to-night and Nan has been found and seems not to have suffered much from her fright and exposure.

Now I'll try to think back and tell everything as it happened. This morning—my! that seems a long time ago!—we left Old Faithful Inn at eight o'clock. We've written you how we found Marjorie Deming and Miss Harper and Franklin Arnold at Mammoth Hot Springs, so you know the members of our coaching party. We're all great friends now—like one big family—piling into the stage every morning and riding together most of the day. Even Mr. and Mrs. Dillon—the bridal couple whom we call the Misfits (he's about thirty and she's over sixty, that's why)—seem like old acquaintances.

The first day we made up a coach song and yell and we sing them lustily as we drive up to a new hotel each night. But this day, being Sunday, we expected to spend quietly driving through some of the prettiest wooded sections of the Park to reach Yellowstone Lake. We

all felt rather tired after so much sightseeing, for we walked a lot in the geyser basin yesterday, and were glad of an excuse to rest.

We really felt reluctant to say good-bye to Old Faithful. Both the wonderful geyser and the beautiful rustic Inn had charmed us to the point where parting was indeed more sorrowful than sweet. But the Park coaches are relentless. They draw up in front of the hotels each morning and there is nothing to do but climb in and have your suit case strapped on behind. So we had no choice but to do the same to-day.

It chanced to be my turn to sit up in front with the driver, so I had a good view of everything that happened after things began to happen. It was Mr. Huntington's turn, too, and I was glad to have a big man each side of me when we saw trouble coming our way. But "trouble" was the last thing we thought of this morning.

The Lone Star Geyser played as we drove out of the Geyser section; and then before long we saw quite a different display in Kepler's Cascade, a beautiful, dashing waterfall in the Firehole River. After that the scenery became more wild and picturesque and soon we were driving through Spring Creek Cañon and following the course of a lovely, winding mountain brook back toward its beginning in the heights above.

Beside the brook we saw a great many wild flowers blooming—mountain primrose, Indian paint brush, blue-fringed gentian, and harebells. Occasionally we heard birds and passed Mother's glasses around so that everybody could get a good view of those that lighted near us. The driver, who is a perfect *mine* of information and as much one of us as Paul or Dick, was very accommodating, but he couldn't stop long or often because he

had to keep the required distance back of the coach in front and in front of the coach back of us. If he hadn't, —well, I won't anticipate. In fact, no one could tell what——

But anyway, when we were in the midst of this lovely, winding, three-mile cañon, we began to talk of how peaceful and restful it seemed after our experiences with noisy, exciting geysers. And then Nan mentioned how close together the trees grew, and what deep shadows they cast, and how we couldn't see wild animals here if there were any. And all at once it seemed dark and cold and gloomy and full of mystery and foreboding, not only to me, as I found out afterward, but to most of us.

I felt depressed even up there on the front seat between my two stalwart protectors, and a conviction that something dreadful was going to happen ran down my spine and I shivered. Mr. Huntington insisted on getting my coat to put around me, but I wasn't really cold. I had a premonition!

Then to make it worse, the driver began to talk about other drivers' experiences with frightened horses or sick passengers or too friendly bears or narrow roads beside deep ravines. He was very entertaining and we listened with great interest until he began on the famous hold-up some years before. When he told us it had taken place in this very cañon, that because of the close approach of the forest and the winding road, one masked bandit had been able to rob sixteen coaches and escape with his booty,—well, we sat there simply open-eyed and open-mouthed and immediately began to be apprehensive of something similar happening. We were sure we could see masked bandits in the shadow of every tree, as you may imagine.

Dick, your naughty brother, began to misquote in a ghastly voice:

"Sometimes they get one tourist,
Sometimes they catch a load,
Sometimes they keep 'em standing
In the middle of the road."

Mother thought we'd gone about far enough with our jumpy talk and stories, so she proposed singing hymns to calm ourselves. We started appropriately enough with "There'll be no dark valley."

So we came, singing, from the sombreness of the cañon to the open road, and then through the rock-bound chasm of Craig Pass, pausing a moment beside the lily-covered Isa Lake. The driver explained that at this point we crossed the Continental Divide and would ride on the Pacific Slope for about seven miles and then cross back again to the Atlantic Slope.

We found ourselves next on a narrow road that was scarcely more than a shelf on the side of the mountain. And steep! Do you remember Tug of War Hill in the White Mountains? Well, this is called Corkscrew Hill because it winds and twists and descends so rapidly. On one side of the coach abrupt precipices rise and on the other great ravines yawn.

Believe me, Cousin Nell, that was a thrilling ride and if we hadn't been singing hymns, I imagine we would all have been exclaiming over the narrow margin between the coach wheels and space. Price and I got the full benefit of the squeamish curves, but I suppose the inside passengers missed some of them.

I noticed that Mr. Jackson, the driver, wasn't telling funny stories nor hair-raising anecdotes any more.

He attended strictly to Jack and Jill, Beauty and Duty —especially duty. It requires some skill to drive a coach and four down such a hill, but Mr. Jackson knows his business and handled his team perfectly.

Once "Beauty" stumbled and I thought we were surely going over the edge. I stopped singing and sat with my mouth open like a stupid clown till Price slipped a little gum drop into it and brought me to! Down and around and down we went until suddenly something did happen,—but not at all what I had expected. The horses—good souls!—had not failed us, but all at once just ahead of us we saw another coach. It had stopped, and that was alarming enough on such a narrow road.

The driver of the stage in front turned around and shouted something that I thought was "Help!" Then his coach moved on out of sight beyond the shoulder of the mountain. At it passed, a man came into view. He walked a few steps toward us, and we suddenly discovered that he was pointing a gun at us! Do you realize what that meant, Cousin Nell? It meant just one possible thing: *we were held up!*

The man was masked, and he had stopped us just where we couldn't turn around, nor drive fast nor do anything.

Our driver, Mr. Jackson, muttered, "Oh, Lord, for a gun!"—and it seemed a most appropriate prayer. We all echoed it as we began to comprehend that we'd got to submit tamely to this one, armed man. (Not one-armed, alas!) And for the first time we appreciated what that phrase in the Regulations meant: "No guns are allowed in the Park."

As the bandit approached us, Mr. Jackson had just time to say: "Tell everybody to submit quietly and there'll

be no trouble. I've got to stay by the team. That's the best I can do. Oh, *Lord,* if I had my gun!"

He and Price kept their eyes on the man while I turned around and told the folks behind what the driver had said. Goodness! I felt a bullet coming through my back every second until I faced the horses again. I will say, all our crowd took it well. Nobody screamed or fainted or tried to jump out or do any of those foolish things. I *did* hear just one little moan from Adeliza, the Bride, and I s'pose "Dorsey dear" fished out her smelling salts and held her hand!

When I looked around again the bandit was standing beside the horses with his gun pointed at Mr. Jackson.

"Hands up!" he yelled suddenly.

The driver lifted both his hands with the reins still in them. The horses started nervously and he brought his hands down to hold them in, but the hold-up man seemed satisfied. He stood there in perfect silence eying us,—sizing us up, I suppose,—for probably two minutes, but it seemed ages. Then he gave a sharp order.

"Drive on slowly and keep your eyes front!"

He kept *his* eyes on our driver, but Mr. Jackson had no idea of resisting. The lives of his passengers were more important than their money,—and that, of course, was what the bandit meant to get. We wondered how,—but only for a moment.

As we drove around the curve to the left, we came to a wide spot shaped like a semicircle. It was like a natural amphitheatre prepared especially for the neat little drama that followed. In the centre of the stage with the rise of the thickly wooded mountain behind him, stood a man of medium height, erect and well poised. He was dressed in quite ordinary fashion with the ex-

ception, perhaps, of great lumberjack shoes *and* a black mask that hid all his face but two sharp, shiny eyes! And cool! He controlled the situation as though he were indeed the manager of a play and we were inexperienced actors.

Oh, I forgot his gun! But he didn't let us forget it then, believe *me,* as Dick says. He managed to keep not only us covered with it but also a group of tourists from previous coaches who had already been robbed and who sat just where he ordered them to sit,—across a little gully that divided his chosen arena into two sections.

"Hands up!" he yelled, and up went everybody's hands without the slightest hesitation.

"Pile out!" he ordered next.

Frank Arnold leaped to the ground first and took a step forward. He looked straight into the robber's eyes and made a motion toward his pocketbook.

"Can't we settle——" he began.

"Hands up!" ordered the bandit, lifting his gun significantly. "Pile out!" he repeated, with a sweeping motion of the rifle barrel toward the coach.

"Oh, very well," Franklin replied, shrugging his shoulders coolly and lifting both hands, "have it your own way!"

He still stood in front of the coach and Price and Paul lined up beside him. Dick forged ahead as soon as Nan would let him, and "Dorsey dear" bravely tried to stand between his Adeliza and danger. I tell you we were proud of all our men folks as they faced that gun with us white-faced women behind them. I couldn't have screamed if my life had depended on it. My heart had jumped so high it was choking me and I could hardly breathe.

The bandit ordered our hands up again and told the

driver to move on down the road and wait. There was nothing else to do, and we watched Coach 118 disappear with feelings akin to black despair. We knew there was no chance for him to get help—nine miles from a station and on that narrow road,—even though we did not know that a third bandit was waiting around the next curve to see that he obeyed orders!

Of course we were wondering what on earth the man would do next, but the bandit himself had no hesitation. He pointed to an open sack that lay on the ground at his feet and ordered us to pass one by one in front of him and toss our purses and bags into it.

Our tall Young Doctor led the way as though if there were to be an operation we'd best get it over quick. His fat pocketbook fell with a thud and then Marjorie's little silver bag chinked down beside it. Miss Harper came next. She hesitated a little and remarked, "This is an outrage!"

"Cash only, Madam. I haven't asked for your opinion. Move on, please," said the highwayman.

Miss Harper followed directions hastily as a relentless round black hole swung in her direction, and the bandit laughed.

Then the rest of us filed by, the robber making various remarks as we passed. He said to Nan, who looked pale, "I'm not going to hurt you, child." But to Dick he added roughly: "Hurry up, you. Throw down your cash and be quick about it."

When the Bride passed, clutching her young husband's coat tails with one hand and her lavender bag with the other, the bandit simply stood and stared. Then as she dropped her bag limply at his feet, he picked it up again and handed it back to her. "Allow me," he said. "It is worth the price." And the poor old thing in her

absurd laces and high-heeled pumps was the only one of us to keep her money!

But he made Price Huntington "shell out," as he called it, even while his eyes still followed the fearful and wonderful Adeliza. Mother and Paul and I came at the end of the line, and I tell *you* we hated to part with our precious dollars! But the man compelled anybody who hesitated to turn out his pockets, so Mother and I gave up our little bags with as good grace as we could muster. Oh, but *wasn't* it mean?

Mother stopped right in front of the robber and looked into the slits of his mask where his cruel eyes gleamed. Then she said very, very gently, "Young man, I hope your mother can't see you now."

He made no answer and no remark to Paul as my poor brother reluctantly put his handful of change and a thin pocketbook on the growing pile of purses and money.

Then we were ordered to sit down across the gulch with the other plucked tourists and to *keep quiet.* As this order like the rest was accompanied by the familiar sweeping motion of the highwayman's Winchester, we lost no time in complying with his request. He laid his gun on the ground beside him and began to open the bags and purses and put the money only in his sack. You would surely have thought we were simply watching the villain of a play, so absorbed were we in seeing this cool rascal handle our possessions. Once in a while he made humorous remarks about his haul and so completely did he hold the situation in his hands that we couldn't help smiling to hear him. But if we moved so much as a foot, he seemed to know it and would reach for his gun.

He searched our bags with as great care as we could have shown ourselves. When he came to Miss Harper's, he tried to open it and then looked up and said courteously: "I'm not able to undo this handsome bag and I dislike to spoil it by forcing it or slitting it open. If the lady who owns it will kindly assist me, I shall be very much obliged."

Imagine that from a man who was holding a gun over us!

I don't know what Miss Harper would have done, but Marjorie didn't wait for her to act. She stepped forward herself and opened the bag. The bandit removed the purse that it held and restored the bag to her, thanking her politely!

"He is certainly the cool one," Paul whispered to me, taking in every detail of the man's costume with the intent stare that he uses on a "subject" when he starts to make a sketch.

I knew he was longing to take out his paper and pencil but just didn't dare risk it. That gave me an idea. I was sitting at the end of the line of the meekly robbed, and it occurred to me that if I edged *very* slowly and carefully along, I could reach some low bushes and venture to take some pictures of our friend the enemy. I had clung to Paul's little camera unchallenged throughout the proceedings. It happened to be in my lap when we were held up, for I had planned at the driver's suggestion to take a picture of Shoshone Lake and the Teton Mountains from that very point.

Well, I edged along and hitched along, all the time watching the strange drama as one coach after another rounded the curve into the little arena, faced the deadly rifle, was emptied of passengers and driven on. I reached my bushes and took my pictures finally; but meanwhile

Nan had had an idea, also; and she, too, had been edging into the underbrush.

She worked her way out of sight and vanished completely. Dick was worried and tried to follow, but he is bigger and clumsier, too, of course, and his movements caught the bandit's eye and brought the gun in our direction again.

Nan's idea was much nobler—and wilder, too,—than mine. She thought if she could escape, she could creep around through the forest, gain the road some distance back and warn the other coaches not to come on. Well, she succeeded, but, reverently I say it, the Lord only knows how. And I might add right here that we've all taken our hats off to Nan's courage,—but it certainly took a big thing to bring it out.

Well, that girl ran all the way back up Corkscrew Hill and warned the last six coaches. They couldn't turn around and so had to come on and be "picked" after all; but the passengers did have a chance to hide a good deal of their money under the seats, in their shoes or in the uttermost parts of their clothing, each retaining enough not to arouse the robber's suspicion. Meanwhile the panic caused by the news was such that no one gave a thought to the news-bringer. And Nan says it didn't occur to her to ask any of the stages to take her back until after she had turned into the forest again and tried to find her short-cut across to Shoshone Point. The trees are almost all those tall, black, bare, lodge pole pines that grow very close together and shut out all the sunshine. Some of them have mistletoe vines clinging to them; and mistletoe was rather significant of what happened later, now I stop to reflect. Anyway, it's hard even for a trapper to find a way through this forest, and Nan, of course, lost herself easily. Why she hadn't

the first time, nobody knows,—or, as I said before, the *Lord only* knows.

I guess she had some pretty terrible experiences,—she said something about a big snake and a bear in a tree,—but she did know enough not to wander far away when she had lost her sense of direction. And so it was that Dick found her at last.

You see, all this time the coaches had come and gone, one after another, each being emptied at the order of the robber and tribute demanded. Once when a longer interval than usual had occurred between the coming of the coaches, the bandit boldly strolled out to interview his fellow-conspirator and sent him back along the road to start up those stages, warned by Nan, which had halted and waited beyond the second curve hoping to escape, after all.

It was the first of the people from these coaches who gave us a clue to Nan's continued absence, which was worrying us all a lot. They whispered that a girl had warned them,—who was she? The news spread from one to another rapidly and Nan became a heroine in no time at all. All my own old love for Nan came surging back. I felt as though she had been away off for a long, long time and how glad I should be to welcome her home again. Just this act of hers sort of justified my old devotion to her in spite of everything,—if you know what I mean.

Dick, your beloved brother, has been more patient than any of us with her vagaries and whims, and of course you know why as well as we do. I verily believe he will be happy now, for Nan seemed much softened tonight. (She's sleeping now like a tired baby, with one arm thrown over her face. She looks once more like the girl you and I had with us so long ago at Washing-

ton. Oh, I do hope *this* Nan has come back to stay! She has seemed to have one of those "dual personalities" we hear about, and it has been trying for everybody.)

Well, I haven't told you how Dick found her, have I? But I said my mind was all in a whirl at the beginning. Besides, it is half-past eleven this minute! I *must* get to bed before twelve or I'll be dead to-morrow.

You see, after all the coaches had been neatly held up and robbed, the bandit picked up his money bag, signaled to his two confederates, and with a wave of his hand and a pleasant "Good-bye" to us, disappeared in the brush. Nobody called after him to beg him to remain, I assure you! But what concerned all of us in the hubbub that followed was, "Where is Nan?"

Dick was beside himself with anxiety and was going to start off at once to hunt for her. But Mother persuaded him to wait until we could overtake our coach and consult Mr. Jackson; for she knew our stage would have to go on in its turn as before, and it would be necessary to make some arrangements for a search and a vehicle to wait.

Mr. Jackson was a crestfallen man when we found him, still faithfully holding his restive animals on the narrow road. He said he had never felt more ashamed or helpless in his whole life,—then he added sadly, "with one exception," but didn't tell us what the exception was. Mother says he's a man with a past, so maybe he had remembered something in that mysterious past. Anyway he looked about crazy when we told him on top of everything else that Nan had gone back and warned the coaches but had not returned.

"Make some arrangement by which I can have a few helpers and a carriage, at once, and I will pay you any

sum within reason," Dick said to him excitedly. Dick was surrounded by the boys of our crowd and men from other stages who had volunteered to form a searching party.

It was finally agreed that the driver in the last stage—Number 66—should transfer his passengers to Coach 118, and that Mr. Jackson and our party should take possession of 66 and wait for the searchers and Nan. Two men who were experienced huntsmen stayed with us and Mr. and Mrs. Dorsey-Adeliza Dillon were sent on in their places.

(Gracious! It's striking twelve this minute!)

Well, I must just say that after a long time alone in the woods, Nan sat down on a log in the forest to wait for something to happen. She was about to give up and start on again in weariness and despair when she heard voices.

She was afraid they might be the bandits', and so hid in the thicket. Then she heard Paul's familiar whistle and at last her own name called, and she crawled out to meet Dick and his company.

I have Paul's word for it,—and I think you will be just as glad to hear it as I was,—that Nan just threw her arms around Richard's neck and hid her face on his shoulder. (This is where the mistletoe comes in!) She was so still they thought she'd fainted, but when she looked up she was blushing fiery red, and everybody beat a retreat and left her and Dick to come along alone and explain things to each other.

The whole crowd have praised Nan and hugged her and kissed her and I guess she's gone to bed the happiest girl alive.

Now I've got to follow her, and I'm happy, too,—for her sake and Dick's as well as my own.

I'm really sleepy now, so I think I've "written off" most of my excitement.

With love to you and Cousin Jack and dear little Littlejohn,

PEGGY.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT INSPIRATION POINT.

The evening at Yellowstone Lake was a memorable one to all the tourists who had passed through the excitement of the hold-up at Shoshone Point. While many of the women were exhausted by the nervous strain of the experience, and all of the victims, both men and women, still felt incensed at the boldness and success of the attack, no one failed to respond in some degree to the calming influence of the beautiful lake. Even at the Thumb—the west arm of the lake—where they had stopped for a belated lunch not long after their release by the bandits, they had felt the witchery of this unusual sheet of water lying serenely a mile and a half above sea level.

The beauty of the azure lake was enhanced by thickly wooded slopes, distant mountains faintly blue and lofty snow-capped peaks. A few islands dotted this inland sea, many pelicans and other water birds haunted its shores, and prodigal Nature had scattered some of her store of paint pots, hot springs and geysers close to its borders. She had even placed one unique hot spring—the fish cone—within the confines of the lake itself, so that the lucky fisherman might

catch and cook his fish with a single swing of his arm. And no fisherman need be unlucky for the lake abounds in trout, as any one who will may prove.

Those of the Hilton party, however, who cared to spend an hour on the lake, simply rowed or drifted lazily and listened to the Sunday evening music as it floated over the water to them from the camps that gleamed here and there on shore. A sunset of unusual beauty had flung its colors over water and sky and distant mountains. Against a flaming background the Grand Teton lifted its lofty spire over thirteen thousand feet and from among the peaks of the Absaroka Range the Sleeping Giant turned his face upward toward the glory that recorded the departure of the king of day.

Peggy and her mother, sitting quietly with Nan behind the columns of the Colonial Hotel, also shared the royal splendor of that sunset hour.

"And to-day," mused Nan aloud, "only *to-day* I have been held up by a robber and lost in the woods!"

"And found!" added Peggy happily.

"I lost and found more than you know," continued Nan soberly, shaking her black curls in emphasis. "All alone in the forest I saw myself, and I was not pleased with what I saw. I was ashamed,—and I wanted to be forgiven—for—a whole lot of things. I wasn't so much *afraid* as I was anxious for another chance to live—right. And when I saw Richard Hunter coming

for me—I was never so *glad* to see anybody in all my life!"

Nan's face shone with a new clearness and radiance, and a little later she kissed Peggy and her mother good-night with a sweetness and sincerity that proved the change in her to be indeed a change of heart.

And then they went indoors, and Peggy sat down to write the letter to her Cousin Nell, which we have already read.

When Coach 118 gathered up its party the next morning in front of the Colonial Hotel, Driver Jackson reported that the soldiers sent out after the bandits had had no success. It was practically certain that the robbers had made good their escape by boat to Jackson Lake, and would be in the Jackson Hole country and beyond their jurisdiction long before either infantry or cavalry could reach the border to head them off.

That was a rather discouraging message to those who had hoped to recover some, at least, of their money, but immediate difficulties were avoided because most of the tourists had purchased tickets not only for the Park trip but for the homeward journey in advance. So the coaching tour was resumed quite as though nothing had happened.

Richard Hunter realized, however, that a great deal had happened, and from his own standpoint he was rather inclined to thank the Lord for the bandit! For to him the immediate result was one that delighted and bewildered him. The Nan whom he had idealized had come to life! The sting had been drawn from her

words, the mockery from her eye and the edge from her smile. The Nan of this morning was a creature softened and beautified and rendered more than ever bewitching by a change too subtle for mortal man to comprehend—and Dick was mortal.

The spirit of "All's well with the world" seemed to pervade the entire coaching party and even to influence the driver and his horses, for steadily and serenely the stage moved on its way beside the shore of Yellowstone Lake, coming in time to Yellowstone River and thence to one of Nature's strangest freaks in this land of wonders.

In a great funnel-shaped crater, to see which the party walked up a hill from the road, vast masses of blue-gray clay surged and boiled. From a steam vent in one side big lumps of the clay or mud shot up almost constantly, striking with loud thuds the opposite side of the crater as they fell. This lively pit was called the Mud Volcano and seemed the most weird of all the queer sights they had seen. Close by, presenting a complete contrast to this ugly, muddy hole, were the clear, sparkling, bubbling waters of the Grotto Spring. And only a few miles further a remarkable sulphur mountain and spring heralded their presence by a strong odor noticeable long before they were approached.

The Yellowstone River, constantly in sight on this morning's drive, presented a series of most interesting motion pictures. First it ran along through the lower part of Hayden Valley, a meek and lovely stream, suggesting the quiet

meanderings of a country brook. But later, forced into narrow, rocky confines, the river became a madly dashing torrent interrupted by numerous foaming cascades. Later still, coming to an abrupt precipice, it fell one hundred feet over the cliffs in a rushing, whirling mass,—and the Upper Falls of the Cañon were reached.

By the time Coach 118 had advanced to this point, its passengers were wildly enthusiastic about the picturesque and lovely features of the scenery. They began to appreciate that Nature's grewsome and uncanny exhibitions had been shown to them first, and her glorious masterpieces reserved for the climax of their enjoyment.

The afternoon of their arrival at the Cañon Hotel gave Peggy and Paul the opportunity they were longing for,—time for a long walk through the beautiful woods and along the rim of the gorgeously colored cañon. They found most of the party equally eager to explore the woodland paths and get a closer view of the chasms and cataracts that made the cañon famous. Only the Dorsey-Dillons seemed uninterested.

So, soon after luncheon, the rest started off in light marching order, carrying the only arms allowed hunters in the Park: bird glasses and cameras. They found occasion to use the latter very soon, for on the ground beneath a tree not many rods from the hotel, a beautiful doe rested. She turned her sleek brown head toward the intruders but did not make the slightest motion to rise nor betray any indication of fear as

they stopped and talked in whispers and approached near enough to photograph her.

"Isn't that wonderful?" murmured Paul.

"I never expected to see so tame a wild animal," marveled Marjorie.

"It's a perfect *dear!*" exclaimed Nan, longing to pat the smooth brown head.

"Right again," said Richard. "I see several others not far away, too."

"Where?" questioned the girls eagerly.

"Oh!" groaned the boys.

"Time to move on," added Paul, who was impatient to reach their goal, Inspiration Point.

They stopped, however, to see the view from Lookout and to climb and photograph the Granite Boulder,—a huge example of glacial drift deposited in the woods twenty miles from any other bit of granite.

Peggy often wondered what there was about that walk and the view from Inspiration Point to make the twenty-third of July *the* Red Letter day of all the distinctive days in the Park. Perhaps it was because the feet of the travelers actually touched the springing turf; their hands caressed the bark of trees, the stems of flowers, the little clinging bodies of baby squirrels, the hard, resisting surfaces of rocks; their eyes discovered the wandering deer and examined at will the nearer features and the distant marvels of the cañon, directed by no guide or guide-book. Perhaps it was because the young people themselves felt more intimate with Nature when she expressed herself in trees and rocks and rivers than in geysers and hot springs and volcanoes.

And so in the more familiar environment they may have felt their own close acquaintance progressing in leaps and bounds. They may have realized subconsciously that dear, long-to-be-remembered experiences *shared* bring closer those who share them.

However that may have been, the afternoon was one long delight to the "118 crowd," as they designated themselves.

At Inspiration Point they looked down nearly fourteen hundred feet to the winding, foam-flecked river, and could scarcely believe that that stream, strong and turbulent as it was, could be responsible for the slow erosion that had carved this remarkable cañon out of perishable rhyolite. Once, so they were told, the surface of the river bed had been as high as Yellowstone Lake. Nothing but the constant "wearing away of the stone" had affected this gigantic chasm. Those of the tourists who had visited the Grand Cañon of the Colorado the year before and had been stunned and overawed by its incomprehensible vastness and splendor, were the most enthusiastic over this less terrible but more friendly chasm.

"We know how to understand you, you beautiful thing," Peggy exclaimed, gazing into the wonderfully tinted gorge. "And we're going to *know* you—every inch of you that two days' companionship can give us."

"I'm simply mad to get down there," she heard Nan say just then.

"To-morrow we can all go," Price Huntington replied. "There is a good trail on the other side of the river."

"I wonder where?" Peggy inquired, looking at the sheer drop below them, the jagged promontories where eagles hovered, the bare projections of rose and yellow and green tinted rock, the timber growing thickly wherever it could secure a foothold.

"Not far from the foot of the Great Falls, I believe. And the road beyond leads to Artist's Point."

"Oh, another splendid walk!" cried Peggy.

"Too far for *girls,* though," put in Paul. "We fellows will tell you about it."

"Will you?" retorted Peggy. "Wait and see!"

"What I am curious to know," came in Marjorie's gentle English tones, "is how the rock just here in the cañon happens to have all this gay coloring."

"I can tell you what I have read," replied Frank Arnold. "It appears that a great deal of the rock in the Park is of volcanic origin, easily decomposed by the action of steam and hot water, and that the remarkable colors in the Grand Cañon are the result of this decomposition. There are many other places in the Park, also, where cañons like this might exist if the eroding agencies were there to carve them out."

"But you said something about the colors being caused by steam and hot water. This river is cold, isn't it?"

"Well,—I suppose so. I guess that's a point I missed. I'll look it up later."

"We ought to find out when we're down in the cañon. We can be scientific investigators ourselves. Oh, I can hardly wait until to-morrow to

go down the trail," Marjorie continued with unusual fervor, going still nearer to the rock-bound edge of the chasm and so failing to notice that the others were already starting back toward the woods. "Think of being able to touch the very heart of this gorgeous cañon and feel it beat! See how dense the shadows are down there already and how vivid the coloring in the walls where the sun still strikes. How wonderful it will be to see it all from below!—And those great, splashing, roaring falls! I'm sure that your famous Niagara can be no more lovely."

"How you are enjoying yourself, Marjorie," said Franklin, standing alone beside her and slipping his arm around her as they leaned together toward the brink. "I wonder what makes you so happy. I wish I might think you had the same reason I have—because—because we're seeing it all *together*. Because you and I are here,—and nothing else matters. Marjorie, dear, listen: We have just this precious moment alone,—yes, the others have started on,—Marjorie, don't you know why everything in the beautiful Park is *so* beautiful—to me? It's just because *you* are here,—and because—oh, Marjorie, don't you *know?*—because *I love you,* dear."

Marjorie listened to this rapid pouring forth of Franklin's pent-up feelings in perfect silence. It came to her as a shock that sent a thousand thrilling messages through all the sensitive nerves of her system. Her heart almost stopped beating. Her body grew rigid and her hands

clutched the slender railing that alone stood between them and the river bed far below.

"I—you—I—you shouldn't," she gasped in real distress.

He looked at her, surprised at the depth of her feeling. Then he saw at once that the trouble was not his love but his declaration. And a great light broke upon him.

He withdrew his arm, turning her gently so that she faced him. Then he stood erect, looking down steadily into her eyes.

"Marjorie, I understand. I had forgotten. Of course you look upon these things differently than most American girls do. I meant no wrong. I will wait. But when the right time comes, little English cousin, I shall tell you again that—I love you. And then I shall ask you—something else."

"Oh, hello! There you are." It was Paul's voice, breaking in on Franklin's last hasty words. "We missed the Crown Princess and the Quack and so, said I, I'd hasten back.—Hush! I made a rhyme! Oh, ho! Peggy! Wait a minute. I'm a poet and didn't know it!—Ye geysers and little growlers, I did it again!"

"Well, isn't this *Inspiration* Point?" suggested Nan demurely. Her clear voice floated back to the two who had loitered.

"*I* found an inspiration," whispered the Young Doctor to Marjorie. "You're not offended, dear, are you?"

Marjorie had not yet recovered the control of her speech. She shook her head and looked up

at her tall, impetuous lover. But something in her eyes went to his head like wine.

"You darling!" he whispered, pressing her arm closely as he helped her to the smoother path. "I wonder how you'll like to live in Portsmouth, New Hampshire?"

Marjorie's silver laugh rang out suddenly. He looked up, pleased but puzzled. She was thinking, "And he said just now he would *wait!*"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FOREST OF ARDEN—AN INTERLUDE.

Something potent, but indefinable—like the presence of a vague perfume in a fragrant atmosphere—caused all sorts of delightful feelings and fancies in everybody on the homeward walk from Inspiration Point. Possibly the pulsating air was charged with the message that Price had spoken, and so carried a current of courage and conviction into the hearts of the others.

To Dick, certainly, came a delicious sense of well-being, which grew with every glance of the black-eyed maid who had charmed him. For Nan, perhaps because she could not quite forget the loneliness and terror of her experience the day before, was a little model of sweetness and gentleness. She was a revelation even to Peggy, who felt her former resentment oozing away and leaving only love and admiration in its place.

Nan was quite forgetful of her usual dominant self, and displayed a fresh, childlike wonder in each new phase of fun or strange freak of Nature. When they discovered the nest of wee baby squirrels her enthusiasm infected them all.

"Oh, the *darlings!*" she cried, as the little furry creatures peeped out from the shelter of the rock

that protected them. "They are not a bit afraid. I'm going to take one in my hands."

Nan picked up the liveliest of the four squirrel babies, who were stretching and crawling and flopping weakly over one another in their efforts to join the party outside.

"It feels just like a helpless, blind baby kitten," she exclaimed, stroking it tenderly. Her flushed face bent broodingly over the tiny clinging thing, and click! went Dick's camera. Click! echoed Paul's kodak, as she lifted her head.

"Oh, I'm so glad you took the squirrel's picture!" she cried happily. "Isn't it cunning?" And she did not even remember that she had posed *with* the squirrel!

"Well, if we ever think that the Nan of this day was only a dream, we have pictures as proof," thought Paul, wondering much at her transformation. "That would make a dandy sketch," he mused, narrowing his eyes: "Nan holding one squirrel, the others at her feet, looking up enviously, and these tall, slender trees rising thickly in the background. H'm! That might make me famous some day!"

Meanwhile, Price had caught up the other squirrels and snapped a picture of them as they crawled lovingly over Peggy's shoulder and snuggled into her neck.

"These are the tamest things, and the clingyest!" Peggy exclaimed, trying vainly to persuade the young squirrels that it was time to go home. They fastened themselves the more closely to her fingers as she attempted to loosen their clasp, stuck their sharp little claws through her blouse

and pricked her shoulders in a desperate effort to find a firm foothold.

Finally, one by one, they were carefully dislodged and put back into their nest, Price holding them there while the rest of the crowd hurried away. As he came running after them, a laugh made him turn and look back—the tiny things had struggled out again and were crawling along on the ground, trying their best to overtake their new friends.

"It's a shame to leave them!" cried Nan, stopping short. "If I only could carry one home!"

"Oh, Nannie had a little squir'l,
She found it in a hollow,
And everywhere that Nannie went
The squir'l was sure to follow,"

improvised Peggy, throwing an arm affectionately around Nan in the good, old, almost-forgotten fashion.

Nan looked at her oddly. "'It feels good 'round the neck,'" she quoted mischievously, and Peggy gave her a warm hug.

"What an ideal path for lovers!" said Paul to his mother, a little later, lifting his eyebrows significantly with a look forward, and then pointing an eloquent hand over his shoulder.

Mrs. Bennett smiled as she stopped to follow his glance and gesture. Dorsey and Adeliza Dillon, in all the glory of white flannels, white spats, white frills, and white parasol, were approaching from the direction of the hotel, and behind her and Paul three couples of earnestly conversing

young people were slowly strolling, preceded by the solitary figure of Miss Harper, her head bent over a flower that she was evidently analyzing.

"It does look a little loverish," she admitted, "but it may be only the effect of these romantic woods. I feel, myself, a little like one of *Rosalind's* companions in the *Forest of Arden.*"

Nan Cummings caught the last words as she and Richard joined them. "Wouldn't this be the very place of all others to read 'As You Like It' —and to act it out!" she said eagerly.

"Marjorie and you might easily be *Rosalind* and *Celia,*" suggested Dick, catching her spirit, "and Doctor Frank would need no rehearsing for *Orlando's* part, I'm——"

"Why not let Peggy be *Rosalind?*" interrupted Miss Harper, a little tartly.

"Oh, no! Peggy—well, Peggy makes me think more of *Portia,*" cried Nan, kindling with the enthusiasm that Shakespeare always excited in her. "She would want to test her *Bassanio* a long while before she admitted she loved him."

"But, Marjorie?" asked Mrs. Bennett, almost involuntarily, surprised at Nan's acute analysis.

"Oh, Marjorie might fall in love at first sight, and give up princes, palaces, and powers for the lucky man—and he would be lucky, too," she concluded fervently. "The Doctor *would* make a splendid *Orlando* to her *Rosalind,* wouldn't he?"

Miss Harper looked at Nan in some displeasure. "Your fancy is quite remarkable," she said coldly. "Fortunately, Marjorie herself is entirely unimaginative. She adores Shakespeare,

but reads him with the heart and mind of a child."

Mrs. Bennett looked at the young-old chaperon in amazement. Was it possible that she had failed to see the golden-tipped arrows mischievous Cupid had set flying in their midst? Clearly it was not her duty to enlighten Miss Harper. Not for worlds would she say one word that might blight Marjorie's budding happiness, for "Mother Bennett," remembering, thought it a most perfect and lovely thing. And, remembering, she sighed. How her loverlike artist husband would have fitted into this whispering Forest! How he *had* been a part of the magic and the beauty and the romance of the blue-vaulted, blue-surfaced lakes and deep-mirrored mountains in far-away Italy! Ah, she would never forget! And now, it seemed, she was to live again in an age of romance. Of the outcome of Marjorie's affairs she felt no question, little guessing what had been said at Inspiration Point, but fully believing that Franklin was no laggard in love.

Of Dick's feelings and progress she was to hear from his own lips later that very evening. The brilliant day ended in a long twilight that tempted the younger people to stroll to the Upper Falls, to seek the bears at their evening meal, and to follow the deer that had stolen to the little pool near the hotel. Dick, however, soon left the wanderers and came back to his aunt, whom he had left alone on the piazza. He could not let slip this rare opportunity to pour into her sympathetic ear his hopes and fears. His hopes seemed largely based on the kindness of the new Nan,

and his fears grew out of the discrepancy in their ages.

"After all, what is eight years? They've merely given me time to get ready for her sooner. For mark my word, Wellesley is never going to see Nan again if I have my way about it!"

"Crazy, crazy Dick," said his aunt, laying her hand on his shoulder. "College is just what Nan needs now to develop her. She's barely begun to live, and she has a lot to learn."

"She suits me," replied Dick stubbornly, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "I really want to marry her while she's still a kid. Actually, I love her even when she sulks!"

"She does sulk prettily," agreed Mrs. Bennett, laughing.

"Well, I suppose I sound as though I had a queer spot in my gray matter, but I've never even looked at any girl but Nan—not twice, you know. I seem to see only her—like a star when only one is shining in the sky. Queer, isn't it?"

"Most unusual," replied Mrs. Bennett, her eyes twinkling like stars themselves in the semi-darkness.

Dick laughed, stretched his long arms lazily, and went off to find Nan.

Just then, from within the hotel, came snatches of a song:

"It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
. . . . . .
Sweet lovers love the spring."

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNCLE TOM'S TRAIL.

"This is to be a day of great adventure," thought Marjorie Deming happily as she rose the morning after the significant visit to Inspiration Point. She looked out upon a world dazzlingly bright whose radiance seemed reflected in her own glowing face.

The sunshine had never been more brilliant nor the air of this high altitude more clear and invigorating than on that day set apart by choice and necessity for a descent into the Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone. It meant a long walk, and only those who were good pedestrians cared to undertake it. This excluded Miss Harper, who felt too weary after the six-mile walk of the day before to attempt one that promised to be still longer and more arduous. She and the Bride, whose face and finery were fading a little in the strong light of these days in the open, agreed to join a party who were to drive to Artist's Point, and the Bridegroom hastened to claim Dick Hunter's promise to go a-fishing.

The balance of the "118 crowd" started while the morning was still early for the big concrete bridge, the first goal on their day's journey.

"This is to be a day of great adventure," an-

nounced Marjorie positively to the world in general, repeating the assurance that had sprung to her lips the first thing that morning.

"I should say we had adventure enough when we were held up," suggested Paul retrospectively.

"Marjorie doesn't mean that kind," said Peggy quickly, not wishing even a reference to the hold-up to shadow their day. "Now we are going out in *search* of adventure. It is the very time and place for adventures, romantic, thrilling, happy adventures," she added, chiming in enthusiastically with Marjorie's mood.

"Shall we look for giants or fairies, robbers or knights, bears or birds?" questioned Nan. (Her happy frame of mind was enduring, even in Dick's lamented absence!)

"I know! We'll find a queer goblin down in the cañon,—all hairy and grizzled like a hermit, ready to hate us or to love us as his fancy dictates," cried Peggy, her face kindling with imaginative fire. "Maybe he'll try to hurl us over some cliff in anger at our intrusion into his realm."

"Oh, goodness *me!*" squealed Paul, assuming a girlish voice in clever imitation of Nan in her squeamish moods. "You horrid thing, to suggest such an awful, awful——"

"Sh! Sh!" interrupted his mother, lifting her hand to stop the laughter that Paul's mimicry had started.

They all stopped and held their breath as, one after another, seven stately deer trotted across

the broad highway and disappeared into the woods.

"I'm satisfied," whispered Marjorie, as the last one of the seven vanished as quietly as he had come, "but I do not believe that even this is the *great adventure* scheduled for to-day."

"What you were saying about a hairy hermit, Peggy, somehow brought Judson Brewster again to my mind," said Mrs. Bennett slowly. "This is the very environment to suit his roving disposition, and," she added with a startled expression, "this is exactly the strange, mountainous country of my dreams."

"Oh!" cried Peggy, clapping her hands, "Mother has given us a motive for our search. To-day we will find Judson Brewster!"

As Peggy's voice rang out, her mother's step faltered and her face lost all its color. Paul sprang to her side, calling sharply to the Young Doctor.

"No, no, I am all right," Mrs. Bennett said quickly, and her voice was quite steady. "You may think I am foolish, but when Peggy said—that, I knew suddenly that it was *true*. To-day we *will* find Judson Brewster!"

A thrill of excitement as keen as an electric current ran through her listeners.

"Just why do you think so?" asked Franklin Arnold calmly, letting his hand stray down her arm until it touched her wrist in quite a professional manner.

"My pulse is not at all alarming, thank you," Mrs. Bennett said, smiling at his prompt action. "My own conviction was so sudden it startled

me, that's all. It shows how little we really expect what we pray for, I'm afraid. I have been offering a prayer for Judson Brewster for more than a year and now I'm fairly frightened when I get the assurance of an answer!" She laughed softly and shook her head over her sad lack of faith.

But Peggy was curious. "How do you *feel,* Mother?" she asked.

"Absolutely sure and happy," was the reply. "My anxiety about the matter is *all gone.* I am confident our search is nearly ended."

"That is a remarkable thing," murmured Price Huntington, who, like the others, was familiar with all the details of Mrs. Bennett's quest.

"It is really not so very remarkable," she said, looking at the puzzled faces around her. "My mother and her mother before her had 'presentiments.' Sometimes they came in the form of dreams and sometimes merely as swift, convicting impressions. Once Mother saved the life of a man by telling him that in a dream she had seen him in danger. He had appeared to be on horseback at the brink of a bridgeless chasm in the dead of night. So convinced was she that this was a warning, she sent for the man and told him about it. He was inclined to laugh—then—but a few days later actually came again to report that he had indeed met the experience. The night before had been dark and stormy. His horse had suddenly stopped and refused to step out on the old familiar bridge over a stream near his home. He had dismounted, crawled forward cautiously and felt for the bridge. It

was not there. It had been carried off by the raging freshets since he had last passed that way."

Marjorie Deming had drawn nearer and nearer to Mrs. Bennett as she related this remarkable incident. Marjorie was very susceptible to any suggestion of the occult. So susceptible, indeed, that she was easily affected by tests of "mesmerism" and "hypnotism," as Peggy and Nan had demonstrated during her visit at Hilton. In fact, when Marjorie's mother had learned about her "finding the hidden key" and "being raised into the air and carried as lightly as a feather," she had forbidden her to be a subject for any such exciting experiments again.

Now Marjorie's eyes were wide and startled and the color came and went in her cheeks. "How strange!" she said in a whisper.

"Oh, these cases of telepathy are not so unusual," remarked the Young Doctor lightly, observing her mental excitement and perceiving that to her a story of mysterious power was an overstrong stimulant. "Don't you know how some people understand each other's thoughts without speaking a single word?" and Frank smiled at Marjorie, sure that she could guess *his* thoughts easily.

Marjorie smiled in return, realizing then her nervous tension. She took a long breath and began to practice the self-control that she thought *her* physician might have a right to expect of her—sometime in the future.

Meanwhile the party had come to the concrete steel bridge that arches the Yellowstone River

over a hundred feet above the water and leads to the road on the right bank of the cañon. They paused for long, thoughtful minutes on the bridge, looking down at the rapids beneath, as rushing and tumbling, the river hurried on between rocky walls to plunge a little later over the Upper Falls with a roar that could be heard easily back at the Cañon Hotel.

Half an hour after crossing the bridge, the pedestrians came leisurely to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at the head of the trail leading down into the cañon.

"Why, 'Uncle Tom'? " queried Price, as Paul pulled out a guide book and volunteered this information.

Just then a very tall man appeared, coming from the direction of the cabin. His hair was raven black, thick and curly. His skin was tanned until it was as dark as an Indian's. His eyes were piercing black and clear, as the eyes of a man are who summers and winters out of doors in a high altitude. And his heavy mustache was thick and black and curly like his hair.

His costume was comfortable and picturesque in the extreme. A red flannel shirt, black, flowing tie, and black trousers caught in at the ankle and frankly held in place by broad white suspenders, suited his handsome face and figure perfectly. He might have stepped out of the covers of some romance to grace this particular occasion.

Speechless,—some of them all but breathless, —the little party of explorers halted before him,

experiencing all the triumphant thrills of true detectives. For in view of their talk by the way, the same overwhelming conviction had seized and paralyzed each brain: This must be Judson Brewster!

What the amazement of the man would have been had he read their minds at that instant, history has no means of recording. But what he said was simply: "Will you have a guide to show you down Uncle Tom's trail?"

"Of course!" thought at least four of his hearers. "Judson was a guide at the Grand Cañon in Arizona. This is just what he would do."

And then Price was saying, "Will you tell us first why this is called 'Uncle Tom's Trail'?"

"Every one asks that question," replied the guide good-naturedly, "and it's natural enough, too. Well, it was along about 'ninety-seven that Tom Richardson, a trapper, made the first descent at just this point. He made his way down with a good deal of difficulty the first time, tying himself to trees and cutting and digging his path before him. After the way was cut, he built ladders here and there and took travelers right often, say for eight or ten years. Then the gov'ment took hold of the matter, improved the stairway and licensed Uncle Tom as guide. Naturally the trail kept his name. Business became brisk and since I've held a license, I've found plenty to do myself as long as the season lasts."

"Have you been here many seasons?" the

Young Doctor asked, and the others came nearer to catch the reply.

"Enough to know the trail thoroughly," the guide answered. "What do you say, shall we start down?"

"Oh, yes," breathed Peggy quickly. "We want so much to get to the very bottom of the cañon."

"All coming?" asked the guide, and they suddenly remembered that his time might be valuable.

They were soon descending the path down the side of the cañon, going cautiously at first and gradually growing bolder as they found the trail less difficult than they had anticipated. The path led to steps—three hundred and sixty of them,—broken occasionally by platforms where they stopped to rest. Then another path opened before them, and at the end of that was the river.

The girls confessed to one another as they stood at last on the level bottom of the great ravine that their knees were trembling and weak after the strain of walking down, down so many hundred feet. The effort to control the tendency to run, tumble or jump to reach the foot of the trail, or, as Paul expressed it, the constant "back-pedaling," had wearied them inexpressibly. But a few moments' walk relieved the strained muscles and no one dreamed of regretting the descent.

The narrow, winding river that they had viewed from Inspiration Point proved to be a wide, swift torrent as they neared its brink. And the Great Falls at whose foot they actually stood at last was a thing of transplendent beauty. It

dropped, thundering, from a shelf of rocks over three hundred feet above them and so vast was the column of water and so precipitous its fall, that it rose again to at least a third of that height in a cloud of sparkling spray.

Then as the visitors clung to the railing of a slippery board walk that led nearer to the foot of the falls, they saw that rare and glorious spectacle—the rainbow in the spray. The mist drifted over them now and again as the breeze shifted a trifle, their shoulders and faces felt damp and cool, but still they stood in reverent silence and gazed upon the grandest and most solemn of all Nature's wonderful offerings.

Peggy and Paul, with Price a close third, had crept to the very end of the walk. The Falls drew the twins with a strange fascination. It drowned their thoughts with its deep roar. They felt lost with it in space.

Gradually there began to float through Peggy's mind to the accompanying rhythm of the falls the words of a hymn dear to the heart of Aunt Mary Brewster:

> "When the mists have rolled in splendor.
> . . . The rainbow of the spray."

The words echoed and re-echoed insistently in Peggy's heart and beat upon her brain, until suddenly, believing that the roar of the cataract would drown her voice, she burst into the song as though her full heart had overflowed its boundaries and found a gracious outlet.

Paul heard her faintly but paid no attention,

being accustomed to Peggy's emotions and their varied expressions; but Price was deeply moved as he caught a strain of melody and turned to watch Peggy. When he saw her face uplifted to the mighty cataract, her eyes shining with the feeling that welled up from within and her cheeks glistening with the spray that drifted unheeded from without, he stole away quietly as though One had said, "This is holy ground."

Peggy's mother, waiting with patient anxiety for her venturesome twins to come back to dryness and safety, perfectly understood Peggy's reluctance to leave the glorious shrine, half-veiled in shimmering mist. Again she recalled with a smile of tender amusement Peggy's need of "twenty-nine minutes to think her own thoughts" on top of Mt. Washington. It was so significant of Peggy. Impetuous, intolerant, uncomfortably positive Peggy might be, and eager to lay all on any altar of sacrifice, yet within, she was dreamy, full of sentiment, keenly sensitive to feeling that was truly religious, stirred to the depths by any great manifestation of Nature.

At last the twins joined the others,—Paul obviously urging Peggy to leave the Falls,—and the picturesque and mysterious guide took them again in hand. He led them to the water's edge and bade them thrust their fingers down through the clear, cold water of the swift river.

"Dig down into the sand," he directed.

Instantly a series of cries rose from the stooping figures before him.

"Ouch!" cried Paul, withdrawing his too-

eager fingers and dabbling them in the cool water.

"Why, it's *hot!*" screamed Peggy in surprise.

"Have you a seven times heated fiery furnace down there?" expostulated the Young Doctor, nursing his hand tenderly.

"This is the explanation we were wanting," exclaimed Marjorie, standing up and looking at the guide eagerly. "We read that the colors of the cañon walls were caused by the erosion of hot water and steam, and we couldn't understand it."

"Well, here are the facts," said the guide, pleased at the success of his little surprise for the hundredth time that season. "The bottom of the river is a mass of boiling springs. No one knew it for a long time but it was accidentally discovered and so many things were explained. And I can show you another proof."

He led them along the rocky margin of the river to a formation about three feet high. From an opening at the top a modest stream of hot water and steam was issuing.

"This is a small cone, to be sure, but it's a genuine baby geyser, sort of a pet of ours. And not far from the cañon are other hot springs areas. If any of you go to Mount Washburn, you may see some off in that direction. They will simply prove to you that you are not out of the Geyser Zone."

"I confess I'm greatly surprised," said Mrs. Bennett. "I had supposed that here the structure of the earth and the streams were what we would call 'normal.'"

"That is a word one can't apply to the Yellowstone at all, evidently," put in Price Huntington. "The whole place is wonderfully and terribly and fascinatingly abnormal."

And with that, the conversation ended and the party strolled at will on the floor of the cañon. They felt like pigmies, small and insignificant, as they looked up at the steep, towering walls ablaze in the morning sunshine, and they tried in vain to number and name the varied colors there displayed. They caught glimpses of Lookout and Inspiration Points far up against the wooded confines of the cañon. And finally they discovered eagles soaring high above them,—the same, perchance, as those they had seen soar far below them on the day previous.

Then it was time to start the upward climb. Laughing, joking, pulling and pushing, slipping and shouting they journeyed back toward the upper world and Uncle Tom's Cabin, seven hundred feet above the river.

Every time the guide spoke, his listeners tried to find some clue to his being actually Judson Brewster. Once when he helped Mrs. Bennett over a difficult place on the trail, she found occasion to say, "Oh, thank you, Mr.——," and waited for him to supply the name.

"Smith," he suggested, and laughed.

"Of course he's not telling us his real name," she thought. " 'Smith' is only a disguise."

And so the others believed, too, and a little later Paul essayed his luck.

"Ever been east, Mr. Smith?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. I've knocked around quite a bit."

That was encouraging and Paul tried again.

"What part of the east was it where you lived?"

"I didn't say I'd lived east," was the reply.

"Ever been in California?" returned Price.

"No. Never got quite so far west as that. I'm not looking for a summer resort just yet, either."

"But you have been to the Grand Cañon in Arizona?" said Mrs. Bennett questioningly.

"No, Madam. This is cañon enough for me, and I like it here."

"But you've surely been to Cripple Creek?" insisted Peggy.

"No. Let's see. That is famous for mines, isn't it? Gold mines?"

"And isn't your name Brewster at *all?*" burst out Nan, unable to bear the suspense.

"I said awhile ago it was 'Smith.' I haven't seen reason to change it since," replied the tall guide in surprise. "Here, now, who do you people think I am?"

"If you haven't been to Cripple Creek and the Grand Cañon and California, if you haven't an old mother back east, and if your name is not Judson Brewster, we don't think you are *anybody,*" cried Nan in much dismay.

"Well, now, I'm John Smith and nobody else. But I'm sorry to disappoint you. Were you lotting on finding an old friend in me?"

"No, the long lost son of an old friend," said Mrs. Bennett, rather relieved, now, that the guide was just himself and not the elusive Judson. She had somehow been unable to reconcile his raven

locks and piercing eyes with gentle Aunt Mary, nor could she, even allowing for the changes time might make, see that he resembled in the least the photograph of Judson Brewster taken in Denver in 1898. Her faith in her own presentiment was somewhat shaken, yet she comforted herself by thinking that the day was only begun and they had been too hasty in concluding that the first man they saw was Judson Brewster.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRICE PAUL PAID.

When the cabin at the head of the trail was finally reached, it was nearly eleven, and a discussion arose as to the next step to be taken. They were all agreed that they must go on to Artist's Point and see the view that has baffled not only Moran but many another painter by its illusive grandeur. But the girls also realized that were they to go back to the Hotel for luncheon first, they would never have courage to start out again to take the six mile walk.

At this point in their discussion the guide proposed that they rest awhile and he would procure at the cabin a makeshift lunch which would enable them to continue to Artist's Point and so finish their day of sightseeing without returning to the hotel. Then Paul made the proposition that was finally accepted and carried out.

"I, for one, am not tired," he said. "And also, I, for one, want to make the trip up Mount Washburn this afternoon. Suppose those who feel as I do, join me for a brisk walk to Artist's Point and back to the hotel for luncheon, and then we can start with the afternoon crowd on horseback for Mount Washburn."

"And the rest of us," added Peggy eagerly,

"will just stay here and picnic and then take our time going to Artist's Point."

"Agreed! I go with Paul," said Price.

"Me, too," said the Young Doctor, but he looked at Marjorie as though his decision were liable to change any moment.

"That leaves a nice little goose party," said Marjorie comfortably. "Begone, you of the seven-leagued boots. We choose to sit on Nature's lap and be fed by—the ravens!"

"I may be a raven," put in the guide, touching his jet black locks, "but perhaps you mean these birds strolling about here. They are mountain jays. You may know the blue jay well enough to recognize some family traits."

"Oh, we do," cried Peggy, waving a last goodbye to the three boys as they trudged away toward Artist's Point. "But I believe this mountain variety has a bad reputation."

"Yes, they're thieves and robbers. You'd better watch the food I bring you."

The food proved so good that Mrs. Bennett and the girls left scarcely a crumb for the jays, who approached as close as they dared while awaiting their share.

Finally, rested and refreshed, the picnickers went over to the cabin door to thank "Mrs. Tom" for her courtesy and to take a picture of her family, and then they wandered down the road like a little band of gypsies, meeting the boys returning long before they reached Artist's Point.

"If artists' colors and poets' praises have failed to do justice to this glorious picture, why should we pipe our little lays?" thought Peggy,

as they sat around on the rocks in silence a little later. Yet before long she had her note book in her hand and was struggling to find the best word to rhyme with grand!

An hour seemed but a few moments, so gradually did the great cañon reveal itself to them. Moment by moment they discovered new and more remarkable colors or outcroppings of rock or fresh glimpses of the winding river in the depths where they themselves had wandered that morning. Each moment, too, as the sun went on its way, the shadows drifted from peak to falls, down gleaming walls to tumbling river, shifting the high-lights of the view.

"Oh, no, no, we can't go yet!" cried Peggy imploringly as her mother rose and beckoned, pointing silently toward the road down which they had come.

"Oh, yes, yes, we must," replied Mrs. Bennett. "We have a long walk before us and it's time to be starting."

Reluctantly the girls left the comfortable niches among the rocks which they had chosen for the best outlook and resumed their gypsying. Back past the cabin with a last farewell to the little family there, back over the bridge above the rapids, back toward the roar of the two great falls and the welcome comfort of the hotel they wandered, loving the leisurely freedom of the life in the open and regretting its brevity.

Soon after they crossed the bridge, Peggy noticed that Nan's footsteps were lagging and her face looked drawn and white.

"Don't you want to rest awhile, Nan?" she

asked, pressing her mother's arm at the same moment to call her attention to Nan's condition.

"I believe—I must," Nan replied with some difficulty, sinking down on a rock by the roadside.

"We will all rest," said Mrs. Bennett promptly, sitting down also and beginning to talk about the walk they had enjoyed and the birds and flowers they had seen, but keeping her eye on Nan as she chattered. She saw the color steal back to Nan's cheeks and was not surprised to hear her say after ten minutes, "I'm all right now. Let's go on."

"You are just beginning to feel the reaction of your experience in the woods at Shoshone Point," said Mrs. Bennett, taking Nan's arm as they started again for the hotel. "Excitement has kept you up wonderfully, but this walk, which has tired us, has fatigued you of course much more. You must be sure to get a good night's rest in preparation for to-morrow's drive."

"Our *last* drive in Yellowstone," moaned Peggy, as her hand slipped through Nan's other arm. "Oh, dear! Why must all good things end too quickly and all bad things last too long?"

"They always do just that," agreed Marjorie. "When the bandit held us up, I thought he would *never* let us go on, but that is the only experience in the Park that has seemed long to me."

Threatening clouds had been obscuring the sun for the last mile of their way, and now the first big drops of a shower began to fall. But, nevertheless, very slowly the four pedestrians climbed the last incline leading to the steps of the hotel,

Mrs. Bennett and Peggy almost carrying Nan the last few yards and depositing her in a piazza chair. Marjorie had gradually possessed herself of all the small bags and cameras so that Peggy and her mother had been free to assist Nan.

Hardly were they all seated on the veranda than a downpour began, the rain falling in sheets and thunder rolling a deep accompaniment to the brilliant playing of the lightning. In the midst of the shower a procession of horsemen dashed up to the hotel. The first dripping rider to dismount was Franklin Arnold. He leaped easily to the ground and turned triumphantly to greet the next comer.

"I've won," he cried.

"You have," agreed the second man.

It was Price Huntington, hardly distinguishable, however, with his cap pulled down, his coat collar turned up and his face wet with rain.

The third gallant horseman tumbled out of his saddle and would have fallen to the ground had not the Young Doctor been near enough to perceive his condition and catch him.

"Why, Paul," cried Mrs. Bennett and Peggy, rising simultaneously as they recognized Paul in the third arrival.

He looked up at their call and gave them a ghastly grin, and then staggered to a wet seat on the steps. He couldn't speak at all but leaned weakly against a higher step, his head on his hand.

"Why, Paul," repeated his mother sharply, "what is the matter?"

Nan sat up in her chair oblivious of her own exhaustion and Peggy ran down the steps to Paul, regardless of the rain.

"I'll be all right in a minute," he whispered. "Get back out of the wet."

"But what has happened, Franklin?" asked Mrs. Bennett again, as the two young men helped Paul to reach a chair.

"You can search me," replied the Young Doctor forgetfully. He felt in an inside pocket and brought out a tiny phial. "Here, drink this," he said to Paul, holding the bottle to his lips.

"Ugh!" grunted Paul as he finished, "same old thing! Always aromatic ammonia around when I get knocked out!"

"I had this all mixed and ready for somebody else," the Young Doctor explained, looking at the girls. "I thought it possible that Miss Cummings might give out, after her scare the other day."

"She did, but we managed to get her home," Peggy said. "We wished for some stimulant, but we didn't even have Adeliza's smelling salts along to-day."

"Here comes Richard," cried Nan just then, standing up in some excitement as Dick and Dorsey Dillon came dashing through the rain, each with a string of fish.

"All back safe and sound?" asked Richard cheerily, shaking the drops from his soft hat as he took it off in greeting.

"All right *now,*" said his aunt so significantly that Richard asked at once, "What's happened?"

"First I got lazy and almost refused to walk

home," said Nan gaily, "and now Paul is all in. But he hasn't told us why, yet."

"I guess I can talk now, but I'm getting cold sitting here," said Paul with chattering teeth. "I'll tell you about it later."

Meanwhile the three horses had been led away, and the balance of the Mount Washburn party arrived as the first arrivals went indoors.

At dinner half an hour later the "118 crowd" met again around the table and Paul, now as warm and dry as the rest, related his story.

"It was a dandy trip, all right, all right, and I don't regret it now, though I can't say how I'll feel about it to-morrow at this time. Certainly the views going up Mount Washburn and the grand sweeping panorama from the top are worth even more than the price I paid. I don't refer now to the fact that through the kindness of our friend the bandit I was obliged to borrow the price of the trip from my friend with the check book. He *always* has the price," continued Paul, indicating Huntington with a laugh.

"Well, anyway, when we started back I saw Frank and Price sort of challenge each other and hit up a lively pace. I didn't know they had a bet on, but says I to myself, 'I'll do my best to get into the race, too.' I didn't take into consideration one important fact," Paul added solemnly. "They are good riders. I, alas, am not. However, I was congratulating myself that I was riding easily and controlling my mount, at least, when something happened so quick I don't know yet what it was! But in a second my horse had started and was running with me. One of

my feet slipped out of the stirrup and I all but went off entirely. How I managed to hang on, I can't figure out at all. We dashed down the trail, swung around sharp curves, and almost tumbled over the edge into nothing a dozen times. Himmel! Then came the rain and I couldn't even see! I just clung desperately. My hands grew rigid with the strain and I expected to topple off any old time. At last the creature stopped at the hotel. I fell off,—and I guess you know the rest as well as I do."

Paul ended his exciting narrative abruptly and fell to eating. His mother had listened, scarcely breathing, while he related his experience, and her eyes were wide with fear as she saw in imagination the dangers through which he had passed.

Peggy leaned over and patted her hand. "He's all right now, Mummie," she said comfortingly.

"Sure I am," agreed Paul heartily. "And say, Mother, you needn't borrow trouble for the future, either. Your little Paul has learned his lesson. He intends after this to climb all trails that wind up hill and down dale on his own two feet,—and don't any of you forget it!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE END OF THE QUEST.

That evening Mrs. Bennett sat upon the hotel piazza thinking over the events of the day. Why had she had the positive assurance in the morning that they would find Judson Brewster? She was glad that the black-haired cañon guide had not proved to be Aunt Mary's prodigal, but where *was* Judson?

She fell into deep thought, recalling with startling vividness the exact conditions of her dream more than a year before, the dream that had influenced her to travel west with the twins and to make a definite search for Judson Brewster. She had dreamed this dream just before dawn one windy night in April. In the dream she had seen herself standing in a strange place,—there were high mountains in the place, deep valleys, swift rivers, dense woods, queer odors, brilliant colors and dangerous passes. She woke, slept, and again she dreamed. There were the same strange surroundings once more,—the woods, the mountains, the vivid colors,—but in their midst stood not herself, but a tall man whose face was shaded by the brim of a wide, drooping hat. And the face under the broad, drooping hat was the face of the man whose photograph Aunt Mary Brews-

ter had received, the photograph of her son whom she had not seen for over thirty years.

And now, at length, Mrs. Bennett had come to the mountainous region of her vision,—and it was her last night here. Was it also a last opportunity to find the man? Restlessly she rose and paced up and down the piazza. Then she beckoned to Peggy.

"Daughter Dear," she said, "I would like to stroll down the path to the point over-looking the Upper Falls. Will you come with me?"

"Of course, Mother. Don't you feel too tired, though?"

"No, I am restless and uneasy to-night. I could not sleep, and I want to be alone."

Peggy slipped her arm understandingly through her mother's and they walked toward the Falls together, neither needing to speak to know the other's mood.

Mrs. Bennett was thinking desperately, "What can I do? What can I do in these few hours left me here? Or am I all wrong, terribly mistaken?"

"Mother, look!"

They had come to the little observation platform built on the point for the convenience and safety of lovers of the Falls. But some one was there before them.

As Mrs. Bennett caught sight of the man standing with one hand on the railing, her heart gave a great leap. In the pale light his tall figure was silhouetted against the mountains on the other side of the cañon. A wide brimmed hat drooped over his face, throwing a deep shadow

upon it and hiding its contour. He seemed lost in contemplation of the scene before him.

It was the picture of her dream! This was Aunt Mary's son. She knew it! And Peggy, feeling the nervous shaking of her body, knew it, too.

Not until they were close beside the man on the lookout platform did he become aware of their presence, for the noise of the Falls overwhelmed all lesser sounds. Then he turned and saw them and drew back courteously. He looked again, removed his wide hat and said, "Good evening, Mrs. Bennett. Good evening, Miss Peggy. You, too, are saying farewell to the Falls."

It was their stage driver, Mr. Jackson!

Peggy laughed softly, thinking that again their eagerness had deceived them. But Mrs. Bennett sighed with relief. This made her task so easy. Besides, it explained many things: the earnest look she had so often surprised in him; the fleeting resemblance to some one she thought she had known; the man's superiority even among a band of drivers chosen for exceptional ability and adaptability.

But suddenly, as he turned to go away, a wave of furious anger surged up within her and she exclaimed in a voice justly indignant, "Judson Brewster, why has a man like you stayed away from a mother such as yours all these many, weary, lonesome years? Why have you allowed her to wait and weep and mourn and pray in vain while you wandered over the face of the earth in

search of wealth and adventure? *Why* have you done this wicked thing?"

"Mrs. Bennett!" stammered the man in genuine amazement. "You know my *mother? My* mother? Is my mother—living?"

The man's voice trembled and broke with feeling, with incredulity, with surprise.

"Is your name Judson Brewster?" asked Mrs. Bennett sternly.

"It is," he replied readily.

"Why, then, do you hide behind the name of Jackson?"

"Madam!" The dark eyes flashed and the man drew himself up proudly. "Madam, you do me a wrong. I have no reason nor desire to 'hide.' Through an error on the part of those who engaged me to drive for this season, my name 'Judson' was understood and recorded, 'Jackson.' It seemed too slight and unimportant a mistake to correct. Indeed, I have no reason to be ashamed of my own name. It has always had an excellent rating back east near Plymouth Rock, and I am proud to bear it."

"Yes, you were known as Brewster at Cripple Creek," nodded Peggy, edging into the engrossing conversation.

"And as 'Jud' at the Grand Cañon," said Mrs. Bennett.

The man looked at them in open-mouthed amazement.

"Are you mind readers?" he asked at length. "Will you please explain how— But never mind that. Tell me first: Do you *know* my mother is living?"

"I do," replied Mrs. Bennett.

"Mrs. Benjamin Brewster — first name 'Mary'?"

"Yes, yes," cried Peggy. "Aunt Mary is living."

"*Aunt* Mary?"

"Oh, not a truly aunt. But we've always called her so."

"And *where* is she living?" demanded the man, still inclined to doubt the truth of this overwhelming revelation.

"In our home town—Hilton, Massachusetts."

"Well—well—well!" said the man slowly. "And I've believed for years that she was dead."

"There!" said Peggy triumphantly. "I hoped that was it."

"But *she's* believed that *you* were," put in Mrs. Bennett rather sharply.

"I see you're inclined to be hard on me, and I don't know as I blame you. My record must look pretty black,—but I'm glad it isn't really as black as it looks to you. However, I'm not going to take time now to explain myself beyond one fact:—I was given positive assurance, as I supposed, years ago that my parents were both dead. I had no other ties in the east and have made none anywhere else. Two words can describe my entire life: reading and roving.—Now tell me this. My mother must be over seventy. She believes that I am dead. Would it be more kind to her not to disturb that belief?"

"Oh, no, no, no," cried Peggy. "Aunt Mary is looking for news of you every single day."

"What! I thought you said she believed I was dead."

"Oh, she did—until just last year when a miserable old——"

"Just a minute, Peggy," said Mrs. Bennett. "Mr. Brewster, there is much to tell you in the course of time. But briefly: this is the second trip we have made with the hope of somehow finding you. Last year we got a trace and were greatly encouraged. But you vanished into thin air and not even a detective could discover you again."

"Oh, let me just ask this," interrupted Peggy eagerly. "Where did you go when you left the hospital at Seattle?"

"And you know that, too," said the man wonderingly. "Well, I spent the rest of the summer and fall on top of Mount Hood, helping construct the highest fire lookout station in the United States."

"Well, who would have dreamed of looking for you there! But didn't you even buy a ticket at Seattle and take a train east?"

"No, I met a man who was looking for an expert mountain climber the very day I left the hospital. The proposition appealed to me and he saw I could qualify all right, so he bought the tickets and we left Seattle in company."

"Well, Mother, when we said he vanished from the face of the earth, we were not far wrong, were we? He was— How high is Mount Hood, Mr. Brewster?"

"Well, we were up over eleven thousand feet most of the time."

"Don't tell us about it now. Paul and Price and all the '118 crowd' will want to hear the story," cried Peggy.

"And we must return to the hotel, anyway," said Mrs. Bennett, pausing a moment to think. "Mr. Brewster, you asked me a little while ago what the effect of your recovery would be on your mother. Of course, you remember that she is *watching* for you. Her mind is prepared. And having known you for five days, I say, 'Go home to her.' Now I have a letter which has traveled across the continent with me twice. It is written to you by your mother. You ought to have it to-night, for to-morrow we go on our way and you may have some message to send. I will ask my nephew, Mr. Hunter, to come back with it, if you will wait."

"I'll wait. I can't grasp all this even yet," the man said, moved by the knowledge of the letter. "But I know I have much to thank you for—and I'll try to find words later."

"Good-night. Aunt Mary shall know at this time to-morrow night. She's hoped for a good-news telegram ever since we left. And I believe," added Mrs. Bennett seriously, "this *will* prove good news."

"Thank you," replied Judson Brewster simply, but he gave the hand she extended a strong, grateful grasp.

"Oh, Mummie, Mummie! Isn't it wonderful?" cried Peggy, clinging to her mother's arm and giving a little hop, skip, and jump as they climbed the path.

"But how *stupid* of me!" exclaimed Mrs. Ben-

nett. "There he was within touch day after day and I didn't know him!"

"But how could you?" said Peggy soothingly. Then she laughed. "You know what Aunt Mary says when a thing is close by and we can't see it: 'If 't had been a bear, 'twould have bitten you.'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WANDERER'S STORY.

The next morning when Coach 118 drew up before the Cañon Hotel, Driver "Jackson" was greeted by a cheer from his party. Peggy and Paul had spread the wonderful news and the others were eager not only to congratulate Mrs. Bennett on the outcome of her search, but the driver on his good fortune in finding a mother.

By common consent the coveted seat up in front was left for Peggy and her mother to occupy, for they all knew that much was to be discussed on this last day in the Yellowstone. For the first few miles the coach rumbled steadily through a pine-bordered highway that framed also an entrancing view of distant mountains with snowy summits and thickly wooded sides. The horses needed less of the driver's undivided attention than usual and he and Mrs. Bennett talked almost without cessation of the situation they were facing together: how to break the news to Aunt Mary and how to arrange Judson's return.

"I am tied up here till the season closes about the middle of September," said the driver. "I'm under contract and I doubt if I can be released because they were short for men this year. In fact, that's why I am here."

"Please tell us how you happened to come here," begged Peggy, leaning forward eagerly.

"Well, my job on Mount Hood was finished last fall and I spent most of the winter in logging camps near the Sound. As spring came on I became restless to travel and chanced one day on a descriptive folder of the Yellowstone. I made up my mind on the spot to see it this summer. So I engaged a seat on one of the first coaches to make the trip early this season and saw all these wonders I've been showing you for the first time."

"No wonder you didn't tell us how many seasons you had driven here," exclaimed Peggy. "Don't you remember, Mother, he said, 'Long enough to know the route,' when we asked him?"

Judson Brewster laughed heartily. The news Mrs. Bennett had brought him and the letter from his mother which lay at that moment in an inner pocket, had seemed to open a secret spring in his nature. He was genial and entertaining, much more like the host of the party than the chance driver of its horses. One could readily accept the current report that he had always been popular wherever his roving feet had paused.

"But how did you transform yourself from a guest of the Park to one of its employees?" asked Mrs. Bennett.

"Oh, I sat up in front just as you are doing now, and found out that the company were short a man because of some injury to a driver. The whim struck me to offer my services. I proved my ability to handle the horses and to bone

up the history of the Park. Then I was sent out for one round trip with a veteran Park driver, but this is my first independent tour."

"And you ran into a hold-up at that!"

The man shrugged his shoulders. "It's all in the day's work. I'm not afraid of excitement or danger, but I'd a lot rather have had my Trusty in my hip pocket!"

"And saved all our money! It was lucky for us that Richard and Price had blank checks that escaped the bandit!"

"And more fortunate that our return tickets were bought and paid for," added Mrs. Bennett. "But is there really no more news about the bandits? Did all three escape Scot free? Haven't the soldiers accomplished *anything?*"

"Not a thing. The highwaymen vanished completely and left practically no trace."

"Just as you did last summer, Mr. Brewster," suggested Peggy.

"That reminds me. I want to ask you how you knew anything about me in the first place. How did my mother hear that I was alive?"

"Did you ever know J. Q. Brownell?" asked Mrs. Bennett, watching Judson keenly.

"The dickens!—I beg your pardon.—Please tell me what J. Q. has to do with it? Yes, I know him."

"Did you tell him your family history pretty thoroughly:—where you were born, your parents' names and when you ran away?"

Judson winced a little at the last reference. "I probably did," he remarked. "He made him-

self mighty friendly for one while and we had many long chats over our pipes."

"Did you ever give him a picture of yourself taken in Denver in 1898?"

"Good heavens! What is there in my life that you don't know? No, I never gave him any picture of myself, but I did have one taken in Denver——"

"A little while before you became 'Lucky Brewster' at Cripple Creek?" put in Peggy mischievously. She was enjoying all this immensely.

The driver gave such a start at that surprising question that his horses thought they had received a signal to move faster, and for a few moments he had his hands full quieting them.

"Apparently it is needless to tell you *anything* about my life. You know it all. But you haven't yet explained how— Hold on! Do you mean you got news of me through Brownell?"

"*He* knew that your mother was alive," said Mrs. Bennett pointedly.

"The dickens he did!" exclaimed Judson, forgetful at last of his horses, but driving them with automatic skill.

"Yes, he wrote her that you were living in 'nineteen-six and were in San Francisco at the time of the great fire."

"Yes, he knew me then," nodded Judson, still staring at them.

"He sent her the information in return for twenty-five dollars," added Mrs. Bennett significantly.

"What!"

The horses started again and Judson had to give them his entire attention. His brow darkened and his face flushed with anger as he pulled hard on the lines.

"Wish I was hauling on the rope that would string him up," he muttered between his teeth. "So that was his game," he said aloud as the horses resumed their steady pace.

"That was *part* of his game. He claimed to have more information—to sell for more gold!"

"Wouldn't I like to get my hands on him,—the double-dyed villain!"

"Perhaps you can,—he has nine more years to serve."

"The *dickens* you say!" exclaimed the man, and again the horses obeyed his rising voice. "You—mean—he's actually—jailed?"

"Yes, he was arrested by a detective whom we employed and was sentenced to ten years in jail. He was well known to the police along the coast. He had been operating under various names, but they hadn't succeeded before in catching him 'with the goods.'"

"And what were the 'goods' in this instance?"

"His letters to Aunt Mary—your mother—and hers to you—the one you have now. He had stolen them from Dick Hunter. Then, besides, he had your name and the address of the hospital in Seattle in his note book."

"Well, well, that's surprising news to me. I never even knew he was a crook. He wanted to invest a little money I had, but I wasn't interested. I'm not a suspicious mortal, I'm afraid," and Judson shook his head slowly.

"There's no doubt that he intended to get your money,—for he was keeping track of you. But what I can't see yet is how *he* found out that Aunt Mary was living when *you* thought she was dead."

"It shows his brain is a lot keener than mine, for one thing," admitted Judson, "for when I found in a six months' old paper twenty years ago the notice of her death and my father's, I never thought of doubting it. To tell the truth, I'd been on the point of going home. Ten years of wandering had been enough and more than enough. A lot of that time I'd been in foreign lands, out of touch with white folks and miles from a sheet of paper or a stamp. But I'd sort of come to myself and realized for the first time what an idiot I'd been. Then when I landed again on American soil, about the first thing I did was to pick up this old paper and read the obituary notice. It said *both* my parents had died—within a few days of one another—and it also said that they had moved from New Jersey to Massachusetts only a few years before. I simply turned around and deliberately lost myself again," Judson ended with a bitter sigh.

"I believe I can explain how both were reported dead," said Mrs. Bennett slowly, searching the dim memories of the past. "I remember hearing about Mr. Brewster's death and how Aunt Mary was very, very sick immediately after. The report you saw may have been taken from one which gave her condition as dangerous."

"Or maybe there was another couple who both really died and the reporters got them mixed," exclaimed Peggy almost incoherently, ready by this time to let her imagination run riot and invent more mysteries.

"Well, it's all very strange,—and unfortunate," sighed Mrs. Bennett.

"I suppose that skinflint went through my possessions at some time, read the notice about my father and mother——"

"And took a chance on there being a mistake!" prompted Peggy, her eyes shining. "Then stole your photograph and— Oh, *wasn't* he the natural born schemer!"

"Where are we at?" hailed a voice from the rear.

The driver came to himself and his duty with another start. "Oh—er—why, here we are at the very spot where the famous 'ninety-seven hold-up occurred! You don't want me to tell you about that, I suppose?"

"No, no," cried Nan's voice. "Your stories are too prophetic!"

"You don't care to go through the experience again?"

A chorus rose in answer. "No," it chanted in unison. "No! No! *No!*"

"Then on to the 'Wedded Trees'!" cried Judson Brewster. "Does that sound 'prophetic,' also?"

Nan had no reply to that, though her interest was equaled by no one else's when they reached the two pines whom Nature had joined together and man had so far failed to put asunder. After

this exhibition, the visitors declared that the next point of beauty—Virginia Cascade—should be renamed "Bridal Veil" in keeping with the spirit of the place, and Peggy insisted that she detected the Lohengrin Wedding March in the low melody of the falls.

But before long the coach drew up at the lunch station located at Norris Geyser Basin where but five days before the party had had their momentous introduction to the Growler and other members of the Devil's Own. Here the colors and perfumes and rhythms no longer led one to think of love and romance and marriage bells.

As Peggy said later in her diary:

Strangely enough, even though we had been through here only a few days before, everything seemed to have added interest to us. The colors of the pools were brighter; the geysers spouted higher; the sulphur fumes smelled stronger; the Growler was noisier, and even the Devil in his bath tub had a worse time of it than before.

After luncheon, we climbed again into the coach for our last ride with "Mr. Jackson," and followed the route back to Mammoth Hot Springs that we had taken the first day: past the Devil's Frying Pan (still sizzling hot) and the Twin Lakes (still reflecting lovely pictures of the mountains roundabout); past the solidly built dam of Beaver Lake and the glassy shoulder of Obsidian Cliff; past Swan Lake and Rustic Falls; through Golden and Silver Gates, by the big, crazy Hoodoos and the more-wonderful-than-ever terraces at Mammoth Hot Springs.

By snatches along the route, the driver succeeded in

telling us something of his experiences on Mt. Hood last summer. He said that building the fire outlook station at the summit of Mt. Hood was the most difficult and dangerous task in the history of the forest service in the west. Only very skillful, hardened, experienced mountain climbers were engaged to assist in the work. Ten men in ten days managed to carry 5,000 feet of lumber from Crater Rock over 11,000 feet high where it was brought by packers, rangers and a pack train of 16 mules, to the summit over two hundred feet higher. Then when they got to the top, they found the wind blowing 75 miles an hour and the altitude so great that boiling water was not hot enough to cook with!

The mountain is so high, the lookout can see right over clouds and smoke and lofty peaks and everything. Last year he located 74 fires and reported them by telephone to Portland so that men were sent out to fight the flames and prevent the destruction of the valuable fir timber.

Mr. Brewster spoke so enthusiastically of two other mountain stations soon to be built that Mother asked him if he intended to help build them, too. He laughed and said he had thought of it but had about concluded to leave such jobs to younger men. Now he was sure it was no place for him since he'd learned of a dear mother waiting for him to come home. His voice broke when he said that. I believe he's having *his* bad quarter of an hour! It must just roll over him in waves and billows and teeming floods all he's missed and all the sorrow he's caused his mother. For between you and me and the Growler, Judson *can't* justify himself wholly, not to us, to his mother, nor to his own self. I wouldn't be in his shoes for all the gold in Lucky Brewster's Cripple Creek mine!

At Mammoth Hot Springs, the Hilton party bade its last farewell to Judson Brewster (alias Driver Jackson) and mounted to the lofty seats of the six horse tallyho for the five mile drive back to Gardiner. They sang for him their coach song and gave him the "118" cheer. Under cover of the excitement, he handed to Mrs. Bennett a telegram to be sent immediately to Aunt Mary. A letter which he had spent much of the previous night in writing had already been tucked away in Mrs. Bennett's bag to be mailed at St. Paul, whither they would travel even more directly than mail could go.

When the tallyhos drove away, the party looked back and at the corner of the hotel saw the solitary figure in broad sombrero and linen dust coat that had become so familiar to them in the six days' tour. They waved and shouted a final good-bye, and again agreed "what a good fellow" he was.

At Gardiner, Mrs. Bennett sent the telegram as a night letter. It read:

DEAR MOTHER:—Thank God, you are living. I will come home soon. Letter will explain. I've been in a far country, believing you dead. "I have sinned against Heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Mother, I'm sorry. Can you forgive your prodigal? JUDSON.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON LAKE SUPERIOR.

Just a week after Paul and Peggy Bennett had passed through the great lava gate at Gardiner on their way out of Yellowstone Park, they were seated near the bow of a large steamer that sailed steadily eastward on the smooth waters of Lake Superior. After a glorious sunset that had flooded sky and water with wonderful color, night had covered the sparkling lake with a sable robe, dotted the limitless firmament with innumerable stars, and begun the marvelous exhibition for which Superior is famous even on a summer night. In the northern sky little tongues of light flickered and flared, now low, now high, now slender, now broad, now white, or pink, or palest yellow.

"The Aurora Borealis!" whispered Peggy, as her mother and Nan joined them. Then Dick and Price and Franklin came up from a belated dinner, and Marjorie and Miss Harper hurried forward with extra wraps, and finally all the little party drew their chairs close to the railing and sat in utter silence, spellbound by the glorious spectacle. For half an hour they watched, exchanging occasional whispers as the colors became more intense and streaked ever farther to-

ward the zenith. Then a thin gray cloud stole over the face of the sky. Another and another followed, sped by a sudden gust of wind. Dick stood up and looked toward the west.

"Whew!" he ejaculated. "Look what's here!"

A mass of angry black clouds had climbed all the way up the hill down which the sun had slipped not very long before. Vivid flashes of forked lightning shot through and through the mass, reverberating thunder sounded its deep applause, and little white-capped wavelets rippled all over the surface of the lake.

"A thunder storm!" exclaimed Nan in dismay.

"Oh, see that!" cried Paul sharply.

Against the left wing of the advancing column of clouds a new light shone. It dulled a moment, then increased in volume and brilliancy, died down once more and streamed up higher than before.

"Something was struck," remarked Dick.

"An oil tank, probably," said Price Huntington. "It burns like one I saw not long ago on the Jersey shore."

"Yes, it's an oil tank," said an officer of the ship, stopping at their side just then and adjusting his binoculars. "That means a long blaze. They'll never control it till the whole tank of oil is consumed."

"And how much is that, sir?" asked Price.

"Thirty-five thousand gallons, more or less, I should say."

"And how long do you think it will burn?" asked Nan.

"Oh, I can't tell; probably till noon to-morrow."

The officer walked on and the group of friends stood staring uneasily across the roughened water to the distant lurid glare and the great threatening clouds.

"What an awesome spectacle!" remarked Miss Harper.

"It's beautiful," said Marjorie.

"Beautiful," echoed the Young Doctor dreamily.

"It's awful," shivered Nan. "I—I don't like it. Won't you ask that officer if we're likely to have a bad storm to-night, Richard?"

"Don't worry, Nan," Dick answered. "Remember we're on a ship as big and steady as an ocean liner, and we've nothing to fear."

Then he ran on to overtake the officer. When he returned, he was laughing. "I've just learned why folks use the feminine gender in speaking of Superior. You know a little while ago one of you said she was as 'smooth as a mill pond.' Now I am given to understand that like all woman-kind she's liable to change her mind any old time. Moral: when her temper is ruffled—look out for a squall! That's all I got out of His Nibs."

Taking Dick's cue, Price and Franklin joined heartily in the attempt to joke away all apprehension of danger. But as the night grew blacker and a thickness less like fog than smoke enveloped them, Dick himself led the conversation into "safe and sane" channels.

"Have you noticed how generous the company

is with life belts?" he questioned. "They are in plain sight in the cabins and main saloons, yes, and here on deck, too, I see. Suppose we find out what they're like. Here, Paul, try this on for the ladies." Dick reached up for one of the nearest belts and handed it to Paul with a meaning look.

Paul slipped it on, pulling and twitching it here and there with all the self-centred pride of a young man decking himself out in evening dress and demanding of his mirror a reflection of his own good opinion of himself.

"Is it becoming?" he asked anxiously, trying to look over his shoulder. "It fits well, don't you think so? I'd hate most awfully to look a fright in the eyes of the merry mermaids."

"Paul, you silly!" exclaimed Peggy, giggling with the rest over his nonsense.

"Here, let me try one," cried Nan suddenly.

Dick concealed a smile of satisfaction as he procured another cork waistcoat and helped Nan to adjust it to her slight frame.

"There, I'm dressed for the masquerade," she said, spinning lightly over the deck on the shining toes of her dainty little pumps.

"'*Tra* la la, *tra* la la, *la*,'" sang Paul, seizing her and whirling her about in a mad dance of his own improvising.

The awkward bulk of their belts gave Paul's embrace an appearance far from graceful, and he and Nan performed at arm's length 'mid shrieks of uncontrollable laughter.

"Let's all do it," cried Peggy.

And in three minutes by the watch—for Dick

chuckled and timed them,—the whole crowd were equipped with life belts and joining in the impromptu ball. Already the decks were tilting at a sharp angle at every rise and fall of the boat as she plunged on through the turbulent waters.

"Enough!" cried Mrs. Bennett, leaning laughingly against her nephew's shoulder as they slid down to the deck rail and stopped only a few yards above the water line.

"Here come the first drops!" shouted Paul, whirling Nan under shelter.

"Oh—oh!" wailed Miss Harper, staggering across the deck as the Young Doctor loosed his hold of her and led Marjorie toward a stanchion for safe keeping.

"Here, here," yelled Franklin, leaving Marjorie to reach the post alone while he slid after her chaperone.

"Oh—oh!" wailed the English woman again. "Oh—oh!"

"You'll get wet. Come inside."

"Oh—oh! I don't care! I don't care!"

Franklin smiled, understanding, and held her firmly until she regained command of herself.

"Now, quick, in we go!" he said, hurrying her into the brightly lighted interior.

Marjorie hastened to follow, her face growing paler and paler. As soon as the Young Doctor had unlocked the stateroom door, she and Miss Harper reeled inside, closed the door and flung themselves upon the waiting berth and couch. Marjorie remembered to be thankful that she still wore the life belt and to wonder hazily if Franklin could ever make the return trip to the

deck, and then sank into that blessed oblivion which is the only panacea for sea sickness. Poor Miss Harper sought the same remedy, but sleep was not for her that night. She rolled and tossed with the boat, but not for worlds would she lift her head to see how Marjorie was faring; nor would she attempt to rise even when she recollected that the key of the stateroom swung harmlessly from the keyhole on the outside of the door.

Meanwhile, history was repeating itself with painful accuracy. Mrs. Bennett and Peggy, with Paul and Price escorting them, managed to reach their cabin with little, if any, damage. Then the two boys discovered the Young Doctor drooping disconsolately over a chair arm, trying to keep watch over the dangling key of the unlocked stateroom and to deny the sickening qualms that assailed him.

Price and Paul seized him regardless of his protests and hurried him to the reviving air of the deck. There they found Dick seated in a sheltered corner with a big black bundle on the chair beside him.

"Got an extra coat there?" asked Paul, drawing his sweater closer around his neck and giving the life belt a hitch.

"No, it's me," piped up Nan in a small voice. "If I've got to die, I'd rather die out here in the air——"

"With me," finished Dick, drawing her closer so that her head fell back on his shoulder.

"Er—ah—are congratulations in order?" asked Paul of his cousin, trying to draw himself

up in a dignified manner just as a big wave buffeted the steamer and made it "tremble from stem to stern."

"They are," replied Dick proudly. "I am anxious to proclaim the glad news to all the world."

"I couldn't hold out any longer," cried Nan in a wee voice that still held a goodly strain of mischief in it. "Everything was against me—moonlight nights, hold-ups, woods, geysers, and now the whole of L-lake Su-*per*-ior."

As Nan attempted to pronounce the last words another huge wave struck the vessel and sent it far over to one side. She and Dick were neatly unseated and the chairs they had occupied slid down the deck and *went overboard.*

"That will do for me," said Dick; and the five unwillingly made for the door and slipped quickly into the close and unsavory but dry saloon.

"*Now* I'll be sick, I know I will," cried Nan despairingly. "As long as I can stay on deck I don't care if I am *drenched,* for I have fresh air blowing on my face all the time. But in here—oh, *dear!*" The gaily carpeted floor rose to meet Nan. She wavered and went down in a little heap on a plush-covered chair. "Who's got sand enough to get me home? I'll marry the man tomorrow!" she said with a last weak attempt to make fun.

"Remember that, fellows," challenged Dick, struggling to his feet again and gathering Nan into a big embrace.

"We'll go behind and push," promised Price and Paul; and the Young Doctor, not daring to

lose himself or them again, rose also and followed, clinging desperately to the back of Paul's sweater.

The little procession bumped its way to the door behind which Mrs. Bennett and Peggy had vanished, and Nan disappeared with a final wave of her limp hand and a crooked smile aimed at Richard.

The four boys lined up by the ice-water tank, gulped down glasses of the chilling water, and then staggered to their adjoining staterooms.

Morning dawned at last. After hours of heavy stupor, uneasy wakefulness and painful anxiety, the staunch boat rode again with even keel. Only an intermittent plunge and thud testified to the unpacified anger of the sullen sea. Slowly hope came back to exhausted natures and life seemed once more worth living.

Peggy Bennett regained full consciousness by slow degrees. She had slept worriedly through the storm, curled up at one end of the stuffy couch on which she had thrown herself. Now, as she tried to turn and stretch her cramped limbs, she encountered some resisting force and finally ventured to raise her head and look for its cause.

She discovered Nan curled up at the opposite end, her life belt still hugging her tightly and her hands clutching the back of the couch in a strong grip.

"The upper berth didn't appeal to Nan as much as it did last night," smiled Peggy to herself, moving a little to ease her aching body.

But Nan felt the slight disturbance and opened

her eyes. "Say, Peggy," she said clearly, "I expect I've got to marry Richard to-day. Will you be my bridesmaid and wear corncolor?"

Then Nan closed her eyes again and dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AUNT MARY'S PRODIGAL.

"Yes, it was a dreadful storm," said Peggy Bennett from the depths of Aunt Mary Brewster's biggest easy chair one morning a week after the experience on Lake Superior. "We barely lived through it. We all crawled up the next day, however,—at intervals,—and by dinner time we were a reunited band of travelers, none the worse for our night of terror."

"What kind of weather did you have after that?" prompted Aunt Mary, hungry for every detail of the recently completed tour which had been so momentous in its effect upon her.

"Perfectly gorgeous," replied Peggy, sitting up straight in her enthusiasm. "Lake Huron and Lake Erie were really like the proverbial mill pond. We just skimmed along like birds beneath a cloudless blue sky. It was dreamland! We rested all day long for two whole days!"

"Didn't you make any stops at all?"

"Oh, yes. We went ashore for a little walk at Mackinac Island, and at Detroit we had ten minutes or so with Ward and Willa Turner. You remember, Aunt Mary, we met the Turners on our first trip west. They were visiting their relatives — the Raymonds — in Detroit and planned to meet us that day."

Peggy paused and her thoughts drifted after her friends, but Aunt Mary recalled her with another question.

"And what did you think of Niagara?"

"Oh, *Niagara!* Niagara is in a class all by itself. It isn't fair to compare it with anything. It is simply stupendous, and the Gorge is splendid. But it doesn't get into your soul, Aunt Mary, quite as the Great Falls of the Yellowstone do, if you know what I mean. To stand as we did in the Grand Cañon at the foot of that marvelous rush of water, and hear its thunder, and feel its cool refreshing mist, and see its shining rainbow in the spray—Oh, Aunt Mary, I thought of you when I stood there! Do you know what favorite hymn of yours I remembered?"

Aunt Mary took off her glasses and rubbed them gently. Her eyes were wet and shining and her lips trembled a little as she quoted:

> " 'We recall our Father's promise
> In the rainbow of the spray:
> We shall know each other better
> When the mists have rolled away.' "

"Yes," whispered Peggy, tears springing to her own eyes. "That was it. It was wonderful, wonderful."

"I wonder if Judson liked it, if it got into his soul," said Aunt Mary wistfully.

"I know it did," replied Peggy quickly. "He was looking at the Upper Falls by moonlight when Mother and I found him. He said he was saying farewell to them."

"Tell me all about it again," begged Aunt

Mary, leaning forward eagerly and letting her knitting slip to the floor unheeded.

So Peggy began at the beginning and once more told the whole story to Aunt Mary, as she had each day since their return.

" 'My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found,' " said dear Aunt Mary as she ended. "Shall I read you his letter, Peggy?"

Aunt Mary unfolded the thick letter and Peggy settled herself to listen. She had already heard it several times, but she knew Aunt Mary felt comforted by reading it over and sharing it often.

"This seems like a letter from a *good* man, Peggy," she said, smoothing the pages tenderly.

"Oh, he is a good man, Aunt Mary. If he hadn't been, Mother would——"

"Don't say that your mother would have advised him not to come home! No, even if he had been bad, I would have taken him in and tried to put out the evil spirit and love him into a life of righteousness."

Peggy realized with a sudden shock of understanding that Aunt Mary had foreseen all possibilities and had been ready to make all allowances for her "black sheep."

"You don't need to worry about that a single minute," Peggy exclaimed. "He's a good man. Now read me his nice letter."

Although this was the first,—and the longest,—letters continued to be Aunt Mary's chief source of happiness for several weeks thereafter. They came as often as Judson could make opportunity to send them, and always recorded his

pleasure at finding a letter from her waiting at Mammoth Hot Springs at the end of each six days' tour.

The balance of his engagement as a driver seemed to him and to his waiting mother interminably long; but to the rest of the people interested, the summer sped on wings.

Peggy had reopened her Good Time Garden and now spent every morning with the circle of children there, playing happily and putting into practice the results of her year of training.

Paul had been seized with a grand, overwhelming desire to paint in oils,—portraits, of course. He had ruthlessly bundled all removable furniture and fixings out of the den and into the attic in order to arrange a studio. Fortunately the den had a large window with the desirable north light, so he did not insist upon chopping out parts of the wall and roof, as he had primarily suggested.

His first "sitter" was Marjorie Deming, who had come home with them for a few weeks' visit while Miss Harper went again to her dear friends in Worcester. Paul determined to try the blue-gold, Burne-Jonesy effect that had long been teasing his mind for expression, and Marjorie's mood fitted his purpose perfectly.

Each morning's mail brought her a letter from the Young Doctor and by the time Marjorie had read it her face had assumed naturally the dreamy, happy, expectant look that Paul wanted to catch. Then he would seize palette and brush and paint furiously for an hour or so, oblivious to all but his inspiration.

Marjorie was so content to sit and brood over the future, planning the little home in Portsmouth that should be near Doc Smith's, that she seldom availed herself of a model's right to rest; and so Paul really had nothing to hinder a speedy realization of his ideal portrait, unless, possibly, his own limitations.

Mrs. Bennett, glad to have a houseful of young people about her, invited Richard Hunter and Franklin Arnold up from Boston for a couple of week-ends in August, thereby cementing her hold upon their loyalty and love.

Nan Cummings was again a leader in all the good times at the House on the Hill, and Richard wore a new path across lots between her house and Peggy's "between times." He had not held her literally to her rash promise made during the tempest on Lake Superior, but he had granted an extension of time only on condition that she keep her word a year later.

"I'll wait *just* a year—and no more," he declared,—and so the matter rested. Nan, serious at last, felt that she needed another year at college to test her new resolutions and fit her to be Dick's life-long companion; Mrs. Cummings was satisfied with Nan's decisions, as usual; and Dick's sister, Nell Thornton, was glad to have the time of Dick's marriage deferred as long as possible. She was not quite reconciled to the thought of sharing her big-hearted brother with any girl, nor was she anxious to have him leave his mother to establish a home of his own. He had proposed to bring his bride into the old

home, but Nell, who knew the joys of her own little establishment, shook her head over that.

What no one knew was this: Mrs. Bennett, who had long been in the confidence of Richard, had anticipated what must come in the course of time and had thought out a solution of the problem. She foresaw that after one more year's study in Boston, Peggy would be eager to take a position to teach and Paul would see New York and perhaps Paris beckoning him to their art classes. Then, she decided, she should close her house in Hilton for the winter and go to live with her sister, Emily Hunter, in Boston. Dick could be married and make a home of his own, and the two sisters could travel or rest at will, keeping track of all their restless young people. Mrs. Bennett mourned a little over this lonely prospect, but she saw it on her path of duty; and she cheered herself by thinking that if it *wasn't* the best thing, she should know what to do when the time for action came.

Meanwhile Price Huntington was back in his office in New York, filing records, searching big black books for precedents, reading up difficult passages of law, and occasionally asking himself if he really had been away at all. He looked upon a certain private case, his own heart *versus* Peggy, as one which he felt sure of winning when it came to trial. Meantime, he was writing her frequent "briefs," interesting himself in all her plans, sending her books and novelties which he ran across and thought she might use or enjoy, and making himself a "habit" in her life not easily to be overlooked or discarded.

Peggy, in return, thought of him gratefully,—and frequently,—and wrote to him about all her joys and trials; but she was sincerely glad that he said and did nothing to spoil their ideal friendship,—which she termed "platonic," to the quiet amusement of her understanding friends. Still, a future without Price figuring somewhere in foreground or background did not present itself to her inner eye at all, so it may be concluded that Price's serene complacency in regard to "winning his case" was not wholly unwarranted.

As the time drew near for the expiration of Judson Brewster's term of service in Yellowstone Park, the interest of all the young people centred in Aunt Mary and the home-coming of her prodigal. He had written her that he would arrive on the third Saturday of September in the early evening, and Aunt Mary had passed the news along in great excitement. Helen Norton, who still shared her home, had cleaned and scoured and polished the cottage and all its contents till they shone, and on the evening when Judson was expected she prepared a cozy table for two in Aunt Mary's dining room, with the gold-edged china and best silver conspicuous on the smooth white linen cloth.

Mrs. Bennett and her twins, with Richard and Nan, Franklin and Marjorie, were to meet the train; Phil Lincoln was to have his runabout in readiness, and Judson was to find only his mother waiting to welcome him home. As the hour drew near, Mrs. Bennett went in to see Aunt Mary and found her patting her hair be-

fore the mirror in a last attempt to make herself beautiful for the eyes of her son.

"You look *lovely,* Aunt Mary," cried Mrs. Bennett. "Yes, lovely is the word, for your eyes are brimming over with love, and Judson will see that if he sees nothing more. What a curious brooch you have on," she added, touching a large amethyst in a quaint pearl setting.

"You have never seen this—but Judson has," said Judson's mother happily, caressing the old pin with gentle fingers. "He loved it when he was a mere baby and I always had to wear it when he thought I should be 'dressed up.' "

"You're not nervous, are you, Aunt Mary?—About his coming, I mean?"

"Nervous, child? Why, I'm merely waiting for the sure fulfillment of my desires. I'm tranquil. I'm calm. I've not been 'nervous' since you sent me Judson's telegram. It was our friend, J. Q. Brownell, who made me 'nervous.' "

"And if it had not been for him——"

"He was an unwilling agent in the hands of Providence for bringing me happiness,—and may the Lord have mercy on him. I wish him no evil. His wickedness was his own undoing, and good has come of it to me."

The clock chimed the half hour and Mrs. Bennett started hastily to join the young people, who were now waiting outside the cottage.

"Good-bye. God bless you!" she cried,—and then ran back to kiss Aunt Mary's brave lips.

Fifteen minutes later the train from the west rolled into the station at Hilton. The first passenger to appear was a big, broad-shouldered

UPB

man in a black suit and wide-brimmed black hat. He waved his bag in greeting as he swung easily off the steps, and for a second the group who awaited him had a vision of a coach and four ready to start for a day's drive in the Yellowstone.

Then they hastened to shake his hand, to escort him to the little runabout and to wave a farewell as Philip Lincoln started the machine and it moved off on its latest mission of helpful service.

The others walked along slowly, debating among themselves how Aunt Mary and her son would meet after all these years of separation. No one of them was old enough to appreciate just how long and lonely those years had been, but every one of them entered deeply into the wonder and joy of the reunion.

They soon met Phil speeding back to the station and stopped him to inquire about Judson's reception.

"Don't ask me," the boy cried. "I can't describe a scene. Aunt Mary just stood in the door with the light streaming out behind her and stretched out her arms and said——" Phil stopped and choked, bent over his starter and went on without another word.

A big lump had come into Peggy's throat as she listened, her mother was frankly crying and the boys were blowing their noses vigorously.

"I fancy she said, 'My son, oh, my son!'" whispered Marjorie Deming softly, her eyes shining but tearless.

Nan gave a characteristic skip and jump and

clung to Richard's arm tightly. "Aunt Mary won't be singing, 'Where is my wandering boy to-night?' any more," she said happily. "Helen Norton told me she used to sing that to herself every night until she got Judson's telegram. Helen said it was enough to break your heart to hear her." Then Nan choked suddenly and reached for Richard's silk handkerchief to dry her eyes.

Nobody knew—though perhaps Helen Norton had the best chance to guess—just what took place between Judson Brewster and his mother in the first two hours following his return. But after that, there were several witnesses of Aunt Mary's happiness on the evening of her prodigal's homecoming. At about nine o'clock, Mrs. Bennett and her coterie of companions peeped into Aunt Mary's living room. They had come up softly, intending to ring the bell and go in for a brief call of glad congratulation. But what they saw altered their purpose and they stole away very soon as quietly as they had come.

A bright fire burned on the hearth—for the September evening was chill—and the reunited mother and son sat comfortably in easy chairs side by side, their faces lighted tenderly by the glow of the flames and their hands joined in a clasp that told of perfect understanding and sympathy. Judson's pipe lay forgotten on a stand beside him and Aunt Mary's spectacles rested unheeded on her shining silk lap. The old-fashioned brooch in the fichu at her throat rose and fell slowly, catching and reflecting the firelight as she rocked.

But it was to her face and to Judson's that the eyes of the group outside the window returned in wondering surprise. Aunt Mary looked younger, as though the hand of love had smoothed away the wrinkles of anxiety. And Judson, despite his big frame and graying locks, seemed boyish, his rugged countenance softer, and his eyes eager and expectant.

The dove of peace hovered above that hearthstone in the little cottage home, and "there was joy in the presence of the angels."

THE END.

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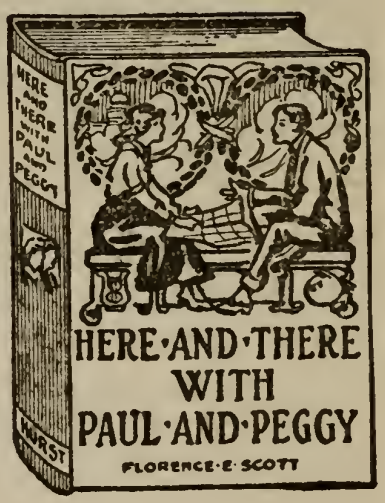

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